

IRAQI CHRISTIANS CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE ■ MEMO TO GOP: LOSE

OCTOBER 23, 2006

# The American Conservative

## SIZE MATTERS

**Common Sense  
About the  
Iran "Threat"**



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## I WITNESS

On behalf of a score of CIA officers who risked their lives in Pakistan and Afghanistan to provide President Clinton with the chance to capture or kill Osama bin Laden, I can only shake my head with wonder over the former president's unwillingness to accept his direct culpability for bin Laden being alive. The 9/11 Commission—notwithstanding its many faults—listed the occasions when Clinton could have ordered an attempt to kill or capture bin Laden based on information provided by CIA officers and on many occasions corroborated by signals intelligence or overhead imagery. On one day in particular, Clinton had the U.S. Air Force drop tons of bombs on the Serbs—who had not harmed or even threatened Americans—while refusing to sanction an attack on bin Laden.

It would be in the interest of all Americans to settle this matter. The 9/11 commissioners chose not to. The documents submitted to them prove beyond doubt that Clinton had chances to kill or capture bin Laden. Indeed, on several occasions he, Sandy Berger, and Richard Clarke were told that the quality of intelligence was very unlikely ever to be better.

I personally submitted almost 500 pages of material pertaining specifically to missed opportunities to eliminate bin Laden, and I and many other officers testified under oath to the opportunities that were presented to Clinton and his National Security Council. None of those documents have been released to the public, and none of the officers were allowed to testify publicly.

No one should care about what I think should have been done. The decision to use our military and intelligence forces in a lethal manner can only be made by the president and his advisers. That said, I think President Clinton does a vast disservice to CIA officers, to the historical record, and to the truth when

he continues to claim that he did all he could to stop bin Laden. Nothing could be further from the truth.

MICHAEL F. SCHEUER  
*Falls Church, Va.*

## TWO KINDS OF ONE-WORLDEERS

Mr. Buchanan's observations on the West's loss of will "to die for God and country" are to the point (Oct. 9). The loss of faith and social structure were supposed to put the Left squarely in charge of the culture and the government. But something happened.

As a Vietnam vet who gladly opposed the communists, I believed I was fighting against one-world collectivism. But I oppose the war in the Middle East. I look at these one-world evangelists of "democracy" and I see only collectivists who plan on controlling countries via the bogus consent of the well-propagandized mob. Their words are empty and their cause does not inspire.

TONY LOSCALZO  
*via e-mail*

## WITHDRAWAL PAINS

Wayne Merry's review (Sept. 25) is very much on target in a number of respects. He accurately points out that occupying Iraq on the cheap has been a costly error. But while Merry gives mention to "willful blindness to reality," he does not mention the most astonishing policy failure: the lack of appreciation by the administration for the great difficulties in transforming Iraq from rule by a brutal dictator to a democracy.

It is not as if there were not many knowledgeable commentators warning of those difficulties. Fawaz Gerges wrote in the *Washington Post* on Oct. 8, 2002:

Iraq's fragmented society and blood-soaked political history should make anyone wary of predicting the swift creation of a viable democracy there. The U.S. estab-

lishment does not seem to appreciate how deeply entrenched are sectarian, tribal and ethnic loyalties and how complex would be the job of reconnecting Iraqi communities, estranged from one another by decades of divisive official policies.

Gerges concluded his column by opining that "unless the United States is willing to forcefully police the new order for many years to come, Iraq will fracture and descend into chaos, destabilizing its neighbors and giving rise to new jihad groups that will attack Americans. Not only will there be no democracy in Iraq but U.S. vital interests will be endangered."

Merry is right that there are "massive risks and costs to staying in Iraq, with no guarantee of a better outcome than if we leave." Certainly there can be no guarantees of success. But withdrawal at this time would, I believe, guarantee failure—not only of American efforts but those of the fledgling Iraqi government. That does not mean that a "stay the course" policy is appropriate. What is needed is serious rethinking of policy options and discussions with a wide range of other governments. We cannot, in all good conscience, simply pull out, disheartening as it is to see not just less important treasure lost but blood—American and Iraqi.

"Worse than a crime"? The Bush administration's mistakes in Iraq make the execution of the Duc d'Enghien look, in comparison, like a stroke of genius.

STUART J.D. SCHWARTZSTEIN  
*Washington, D.C.*

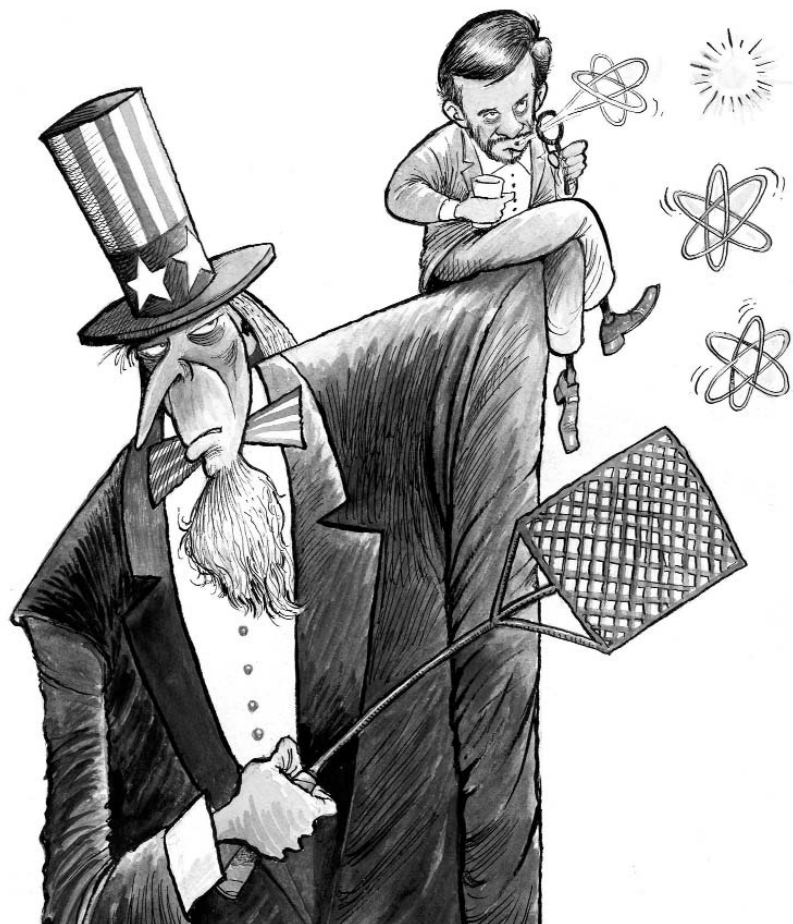
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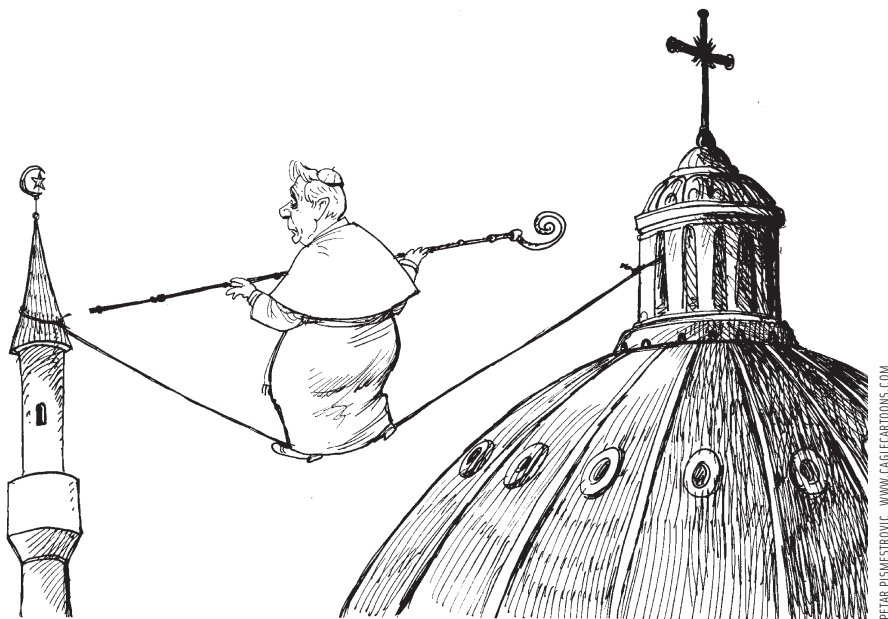
[RELIGION]

## HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS

There is sad irony in the imbroglio between the Vatican and those in the Muslim world eager to use any slight as pretext to burn churches and kill nuns. For the Catholic Church and Pope Benedict XVI have been clear voices of wisdom and perspective in the current conflict between Islam and the West. Pope Benedict was a forthright opponent of the Iraq War, not reluctant to remind Christians that it contradicted the basic tenets of Just War doctrine. At a time when American churches failed to provide a brake to their government's militarism, his voice was not silent.

Now, deploying the kind of esoteric aside of which academicians are fond, the pope has given ammunition to those Muslims who are looking for excuses to fight the West. His quotation of the words of a Byzantine emperor who asserted that Muslims spread their faith by the sword—true enough, though Christians of the epoch were doing a good deal of that themselves—provoked what has become a standard reaction: angry demonstrations by men with seemingly nothing else to do followed by a series of apologies—in this case, too many in the view of many Catholics.

One does not have to hold out great hope for dialogue between the West and Islam—it seems to us that foreign-policy realism and a good deal of distance would achieve better results—to recognize that the pope's statement was not diplomatic. The misfortune will come if this makes it more difficult for him to play a role that someone must: speaking for the West in a way that combines reason and rectitude, firmness with love and respect. This pope could do that, and we hope his journey into polemical history hasn't spoiled the possibility.



[POLITICS]

## CAUSE WITHOUT A REBEL

The agreement on detainee interrogations between the Bush administration and a trio of rebellious Republicans led by Sen. John McCain is less a compromise than a capitulation. While the White House gave ground on its attempt to redefine the Geneva Conventions' prohibition on "cruel" and "inhumane" treatment, the president retained wide latitude in authorizing coercive questioning—and maybe torture. While U.S. military personnel will be bound by the traditional reading of the Geneva Conventions, the CIA will be permitted to use "alternative interrogation methods."

Exactly what those methods are will be left to President Bush to decide in a later executive order. It is not clear whether such techniques as waterboarding will necessarily be forbidden. And prisoners will have no habeas corpus rights. So instead of passing tough anti-torture regulations, Congress seems ready to write Bush yet another blank check. What happened to McCain the Maverick?

He got to have it both ways. McCain won media accolades for the brief period he stood up to Bush. But the presumed 2008 GOP frontrunner bowed out before the party's base became too irritated with him. Perhaps McCain

really believes this was the best compromise. It is difficult, however, to avoid speculation that he was playing politics.

[DEMOCRACY]

## LONG LIVE THE KING

It's finally happened. The *Globe and Mail* reports, "The soldiers ... were mobbed by well-wishers who showered them with bouquets of carnations and daisies, gifts of fruit and bottles of water. Parents brought their toddlers to admire the troops and pose for triumphant photos with the armoured vehicles." Problem is, that scene wasn't set in Baghdad but Bangkok.

While visiting the UN, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatra suddenly found himself a man without a country. A military junta—citing rampant corruption, cronyism, and dissatisfaction with the government's handling of Islamic separatists in southern Thailand—engineered a swift, nonviolent coup.

But this convulsion of political house-keeping didn't sweep out the monarchy. Rather, troops tied yellow ribbons around their gun barrels to show their loyalty to King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

This is certain to confound fans of the Global Democratic Revolution. Coups and kings don't accord with our notion of freedom on the march; the constitu-

tion has been suspended and elections won't be held for a year. But a reported 80 percent of the Thai population supports the army's action. They seem resolved—as Iraqis would likely be if we bothered to ask—that a little stability beats a lot of democracy.

[MIDEAST]

## STATE OF PALESTINE

We have heard President Bush speak in favor of an independent Palestinian state before, praised him for it, and were disappointed when he made no effort to advance the vision into reality. Now, more than four years after pressing it in a Rose Garden speech, Bush has again stressed this commitment, telling the UN General Assembly that a Palestinian state with territorial integrity is “one of the great objectives” of his presidency.

Might there be a glimmer of urgency this time, some small sign that Bush was engaged in something more than blowing smoke to deceive European and Arab allies? Perhaps. Shortly after the president spoke, Philip Zelikow, a top aide to Condoleezza Rice, told an audience at one of Washington's most pro-Israel think tanks that Europeans and moderate Arabs were America's most important allies in confronting Islamist terrorism and that “some sense of progress and momentum on the Arab-Israeli dispute is the sine qua non for them to cooperate actively ... on lots of other things we care about.” Zelikow added, “We can rail against that belief; we can find it completely justifiable. It is a fact.”

Washington's interest in a fair settlement for the Palestinians goes beyond realpolitik: Israel's conduct in the occupied territories has been wrong for nearly 40 years, and correcting it the right thing to do. But if a need for allies in the fight against terrorism is prodding the Bush administration toward a more just policy, it won't be the first time that foreign-policy realism has served moral ends.

[ELECTION]

## SENATOR ALLEN HAMS IT UP

Cracking jokes about pork products is probably not the best way to discuss your recent discovery of your Jewish heritage in a campaign setting, but that's Virginia Sen. George Allen's way. “I still had a ham sandwich for lunch. And my mother made great pork chops,” Allen told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, signaling the plunge of an already unusual campaign into the depths of the downright bizarre.

The race pits Allen, a staunch supporter of Bush's foreign policy, against antiwar Democrat James Webb. But so far the war has taken a backseat to Allen's identity crisis, as he oscillates from politically incorrect good ol' boy to kinder, more sensitive Southern pol. Confronted last month with a (rather rude) question about his mother's Jewish background, Allen denied it. Then he remembered that, actually, he'd found out it was true a few weeks earlier—and suddenly his camp detected “a clear anti-Semitic overtone” to Webb's campaign.

This isn't Allen's first swing from one extreme to another: he has a history of trading in risqué racial symbols one minute—calling an Indian-American working for Webb “macaca”—only to grovel and recast himself as a champion of historically black colleges the next. Once a defender of an all-male VMI, he's since recanted and attacked Webb for a 1979 article he wrote against putting women in combat.

Allen's no liberal, and he probably isn't a racist either. But he is a phony—an ersatz Southerner in cowboy boots born and largely reared in California—whose self-inventing ways have cost him whatever shot he had at the 2008 Republican presidential nod and jeopardized his Senate seat. He's making Webb look better every day. ■

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# New Deal for U.S. Manufacturers

In July, our trade deficit hit yet another all-time record, \$68 billion, an annual rate of \$816 billion. Imports surged to \$188 billion for the month, as our dependency

on foreigners for the necessities of our national life ever deepens.

China's trade surplus with us was \$19.6 billion for July alone, moving toward a record of \$235 billion for 2006—the largest trade deficit one country has ever run with another. Our deficit with Mexico is running at an annual rate of \$60 billion; with Canada it is \$70 billion. So much for NAFTA. With the EU, it is running \$160 billion.

America as the most self-sufficient republic in history is history. For decades, U.S. factories have been closing. Three million manufacturing jobs have disappeared since Bush arrived. Ford and GM are fighting for their lives.

Bushites boast of all the new jobs created, but *Business Week* tells the inconvenient truth: "Since 2001, 1.7 million new jobs have been created in the health care sector. ... Meanwhile, the number of private sector jobs outside of health care is no higher than it was five years ago."

"Perhaps most surprising," writes *Business Week*, "information technology, the great electronic promise of the 1990s, has turned into one of the biggest job-growth disappointments of all time. ... [B]usinesses at the core of the information economy—software, semiconductors, telecom, and the whole gamut of Web companies—have lost more than 1.1 million jobs in the past five years. Those businesses employ fewer Americans than they did in 1998, when the Internet economy kicked into high gear."

Where did the high-tech go? China. Beijing's top export to the United States

in 2005, \$50 billion worth, was computers and electronics.

If Americans are the most efficient workers on earth and work longer hours than almost any other advanced nation, why are we getting our clocks cleaned? Answer: while American workers are world class, our elites are mentally challenged. So rhapsodic are they about the Global Economy they have forgotten their own country. Europeans, Japanese, Canadians, and Chinese sell us so much more than they buy from us because they have rigged the rules of world trade.

While the United States has a corporate income tax, our trade rivals use a Value Added Tax. At each level of production, a tax is imposed on the value added to the product. Under the rules of global trade, nations may rebate VAT on exports and impose the equivalent of a VAT on imports.

Assume a VAT that adds up to 15 percent of the cost of a new car in Japan. If Toyota ships one million cars to the U.S. valued at \$20,000 each, \$20 billion worth of Toyotas, they can claim a rebate of the VAT tax of \$3,000 on each car, or \$3 billion—a powerful incentive to export. But each U.S. car arriving at the Yokohama docks will have 15 percent added to its sticker price to make up for Japan's VAT.

This amounts to a foreign subsidy on exports to the U.S. and a foreign tax on imports from the U.S. Uncle Sam gets hit coming and going. It is as though, after firing a round of 66 in the Masters,

Tiger Woods has five strokes added to his score for a 71, and five strokes are subtracted from the scores of his rivals. Even Tiger would bring home few trophies with those kind of ground rules.

The total tax disadvantage to U.S. producers—of VAT rebates and VAT equivalents imposed on U.S. products—is estimated at \$294 billion.

Exported U.S. services face the same double whammy. A VAT equivalent is imposed on them, while the exported services of foreign providers get the VAT rebate. Disadvantage to U.S. services: \$85 billion annually.

Why do our politicians not level the playing field for U.S. companies? First, ignorance of how world trade works. Second, ideology. These robotic free traders recoil from any suggestion that they aid U.S. producers against unfair foreign tactics as interfering with Adam Smith's "invisible hand," which they equate with the hand of the Almighty. Third, they are hauling water for transnational companies that want to move production overseas and shed their American workers.

How could we level the playing field? Simple. Impose an "equalizing fee" on imports equal to the rebates. Take the billions raised and cut taxes on U.S. companies, especially in production. Create a level playing field for American goods and services in foreign markets, and increase the competitiveness of U.S. companies in our own home market by reducing their tax load.

U.S. trade deficits would shrivel overnight. And jobs and factories lately sent abroad would start coming home.

Isn't it time we put America first—even ahead of China? ■

[molehills into mountains]

# Size Matters

The push for military strikes against Iran rests on inflated assessments of a minor threat.

**By Gregory Cochran**

WE HEAR A LOT about the menace of Islamic terrorism. In the run-up to the Iraqi invasion, our secretary of state told us about the risk Saddam posed to the entire world. Presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich says that Iran is now a threat comparable to Nazi Germany. Occasionally we even hear, from President Bush, no less, about the looming Islamic Caliphate—an evil empire that hasn't bothered to go through the formality of coming into existence yet.

Ever since the fall of the towers, it's been clear that Islamic terrorism is a threat. But how big a threat is it? We face all kinds of threats, everything from Alar to an asteroid strike. If we want to figure out what to do, if we hope to determine the best course of action, we have to understand the size of these risks. In order to do so, we have to understand an enemy's potential to harm us and the probability of such actions taking place.

The immediate threat is that of amorphous terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and its sympathizers. They're obviously quite willing to attack the United States, but their ability to do so is limited. We smashed the core pretty thoroughly when we knocked over the Taliban: the survivors hiding in Pakistan's Northwest Province can't do much of anything to us. They were weak before we attacked them, and what's left is incredibly feeble. We're talking about a group with at most thousands of active members

worldwide, with little money and no industrial base, an organization that doesn't possess a single tank or fighter plane or long-range missile. Countries that nobody has even heard of—does Burkina Faso ring a bell?—have more raw military power than al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda hasn't managed to do anything at all in the United States since 9/11. This is not because the Feds have made it impossible for foreigners to sneak into the country—indeed, they positively encourage it. And it is not because our national forests, dams, pipelines, malls, and refineries have been guarded and hardened to the point of invulnerability. We have done very little about that. It's because al-Qaeda doesn't have what it takes to continue doing us damage; it's as if 9/11 was essentially a fluke, and stateless Islamic terrorism is not a very big threat to the country.

Obviously the Bush administration agrees that al-Qaeda is not much of a threat. Watch what they do, not what they say. They're primarily concerned with countries that produced none of the 9/11 hijackers, had nothing to do with the attack, and had been hostile to the kind of fanatic Sunni fundamentalism that drove those attacks—countries like Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Administration policy—in particular the invasion of Iraq—has obviously exacerbated the threat of Islamic terrorism, for example

radicalizing the bombers in London and Madrid. But the White House thinks that's not terribly important, and as far as strategic threats go, they're right. As for their concern for homeland security, well, they appointed Bernie Kerik, didn't they?

Still many Bush loyalists argue that groups like al-Qaeda are dangerous because they may acquire nuclear weapons. How? It's an important question. They can never make a bomb from scratch: the creation of atomic weapons requires the efforts of thousands of talented engineers and scientists, which they will never have. They could buy one (and a pony), if they had billions and any such weapons were for sale—but none are.

The usual suspects say that some state may eventually give terrorists an atomic bomb. That is, give the crown jewels of its national power into hands it don't control, in much the same way that the great powers at the end of the 19th century were always handing out battle-ships to anarchists. Except that it's worse than that: any state that hands out atomic weapons to jihadists seals its doom. And I mean real doom, not just turning its capital into radioactive slag. That's the least that would happen. I figure that, if attacked, we'd inflict a fate worse than death—turning the nation responsible into animals that remember being men. We could, you know.

The second kind of threat is the rogue Islamic state with nuclear weapons. The usual argument is that many Muslims are willing, even eager, to die for jihad, that the prospect of 72 woefully inexperienced virgins makes the entire Muslim world undeterrable and therefore highly dangerous. Since a handful are willing to die for a cause, the people running Arab/Muslim governments must be too—even if they've never shown the slightest sign of it. Again, the focus has been on governments that had nothing to do with 9/11 and in fact opposed fanatical Wahhabi Islam. Somehow such states are considered especially likely to go crazy.

But Muslim rulers don't act like that. In fact, they never have, not even in the early days of Islamic conquest. People who aren't afraid to die lose wars: the enemy is always happy to oblige them. Patton knew this.

Muslim states fight wars in much the same way as Europeans have over the past few hundred years, only, of course, far less efficiently. Look at the record. Recall the Iran-Iraq War, back in the 1980s, for example. A nation shows its true nature in war, just as an author reveals himself in his book. Iran fought, all right—clumsily—but it didn't fight with incredible fanaticism, even back when the fire of the Islamic revolution still burned bright. Many young men marched into murderous fire but no more so than at Gettysburg or the Somme. Iran didn't take as many casualties (relative to its size) as most of the major players in WWI, not nearly as many as we did in the Civil War. They quit first, which might show common sense but certainly does not show exceptional fanaticism.

As a practical matter, anyone who is all that willing to die for his principles seems to manage to do so early in his career, well before he achieves high office. Most of the people running Iran today could have easily become martyrs

under the Shah if they'd felt like it. Somehow they avoided it. In fact, somehow the people who do achieve high office—in every environment—don't seem to have any principles at all, let alone ones they're willing to die for. Funny how that works.

Such states, although stronger than a bunch of bandits hiding in caves, are very much weaker than the United States. Iraq was of course no threat to anyone: its armed forces were crumbling, its economy morbid, its weapons of mass destruction imaginary. The administration and most of our political establishment said otherwise, may even have believed otherwise. I'm sure we all wonder what they were thinking (and smoking).

Iran is now at the top of the enemies list, but of course it poses no strategic threat to the United States. Iran's GNP is 20 to 40 times smaller than that of the U.S., and the Iranians are hardly sophisticated technologists. If they tried hard, if they spent a huge fraction of their GNP on weapons, they might be able to spend 1/30th as much on arms as we do. But they're not trying hard.

In truth, Iran hasn't embarked upon any military adventures in years: there is no pattern of aggression and conquest, no frantic military buildup. The war with Iraq a generation ago seems to have used up most of the Iranians' revolutionary zeal. We do not hear of their "last territorial demands." In fact, we're still waiting for the first.

Even when provoked, they've been cautious. The Taliban, back in 1998, killed a number of Iranian diplomats along with thousands of fellow Shi'ites. The Iranian government was angry, as any government would have been. The Iranians threatened, they mobilized troops on the Afghan border—but never invaded. I can't read their minds, but I'd guess that some in their government argued that they couldn't afford it,

others that they might lose, while still others had read their Kipling and couldn't imagine what they would do with Afghanistan if they owned it. (Interestingly, Condoleezza Rice, back in 2000, seemed to have been unaware that this crisis ever occurred. When she was interviewed by the *New York Times*, she thought that Iran supported the Taliban. I guess future secretaries of state have better things to do than read.)

The Iranians may be working on nuclear weapons—there is no clear evidence, but it is at least physically possible for them to be doing so, unlike Iraq under sanctions. If they eventually succeed, they'll have a few bombs without any long-range delivery systems. Not a threat to the United States. And of course, they're deterred: like any enemy with a return address, any nuclear attack on the U.S. would be answered a hundredfold, leading to the extinction of their nation.

The simplest explanation for the current Iranian nuclear program is that it is an attempt at deterring the U.S. from invading. It is not part of an offensive strategy. Any kind of force projection strategy would require a general conventional military buildup, and no such buildup is underway.

As for the third threat—the looming Islamic Caliphate, the reason we need to stay in Iraq as long as grass grows and waters flow—it's a bit hard to see how that is supposed to happen in a world in which Arabs exhibit poorer political cohesion than a bucket of scorpions. Look at the numbers: we can't seem to control Iraq with 140,000 of the best troops in the world, but jihadists are going to conquer it if we leave—with something like 1,000 men whose main talent lies in blowing themselves up. They're going to do this in spite of the opposition of the Shi'ites, the Kurds, and the Ba'athist plurality of the Sunnis, who together make up 95 percent of the



population. And after that, they'll go on to conquer half the world. Right.

This is undoubtedly the craziest argument for a policy ever put forth by the United States government. The only reason that we're not bundling Bush off to the booby hatch is that he's ramped up the insanity gradually: first the Iraqi peril, then the crusade for Arab democracy, now preventing the rebirth of the Caliphate. Manage the segue properly and people get used to all kinds of nonsense.

For some perspective, look back at a real threat. The Soviet Union had thousands of nuclear weapons that could reach the U.S. If the Soviets had attacked with all their might, they would have killed almost all of us. I've seen projected fallout maps that showed lethal levels everywhere in the continental United States except for one small patch of coastal Oregon, and I'm sure they would have targeted Coos Bay just to be thorough. Russia today still has enough of an arsenal to kill most of us. Maybe we should act as if that's a bit more important than a wholly imaginary Caliphate?

Or we might look forward. China has four times our population, and its economy is growing far more rapidly than ours since the Chinese invest in manufacturing and infrastructure rather than Arabs. They add more industrial muscle in a few months than Iraq ever had, more in a year than Iran's total. In the next generation, their GNP is likely to pass that of the U.S. If they decide to contend with us, they'll be able to. We may see a global struggle more serious than the Cold War against a stronger and saner opponent than the Soviet Union, with proxy wars and arms races.

The administration needs to concentrate on our major strategic problems, not fixate on weak threats. Maybe Condi never told Bush, but size matters. ■

*Gregory Cochran is a physicist and evolutionary biologist.*

# On the Offense

No matter what the facts say, President Bush insists that we stay the course.

**By Andrew J. Bacevich**

STEP BY BLOODY STEP the Iraq War moves toward its denouement. Having set this tragedy in motion, the United States today finds itself consigned to the role of bystander, the world's only superpower having long since lost control of events. As things unravel, the president—the most powerful man in the world—is demonstrably powerless to affect the outcome. Meanwhile, American soldiers fight on, even as it becomes increasingly apparent that the Army only recently thought all but invincible will not win this war.

For the Bush White House, September 2006 will be remembered as the month when the roof caved in. Bad news came in successive waves: the Marine intelligence report declaring Iraq's critical Anbar Province all but lost; the failure of an all-out effort to win "the Battle of Baghdad"; the warnings from senior military officers that the Army, its readiness in free-fall, is nearing the end of its rope; opinion polls showing that a large majority of Iraqis simply want the Americans out of their country; above all, the leak of the classified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) declaring, "the Iraq jihad is shaping a new generation of terror leaders and operatives." In response to all of this, the administration has had little to offer other than to repeat President Bush's conviction that "the only way to protect this country is to stay on the offense."

Although not especially adept at using the English language, the president man-

ages in this short sentence to capture the fundamental error of judgment that has mired his administration in a crisis from which it cannot extricate itself.

To go on the offensive and to stay there: ever since the end of the Cold War, this vision has animated advocates of U.S. global hegemony. The collapse of communism, they believed, had left the United States in a uniquely advantageous position. The imperative of the moment was to press that advantage, to exploit America's unquestioned military superiority, creating a new world order that would perpetuate American global supremacy and ensure the universal embrace of American values.

To proponents of this view—whether those inside government like Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz or well-connected outsiders like Richard Perle or William Kristol—9/11 came as a god-send of sorts. With shock, fear, and anger came breathtaking new possibilities. Old constraints fell away. All that was needed was a suitable launching pad.

This is where Iraq came in. Pathetically weak, vulnerable, and suffering under the boot of a sclerotic dictatorship, Iraq seemingly offered the ideal point of departure for inaugurating this new strategic offensive.

No one seriously expected Iraq to become the central front in the so-called global war on terror. The incursion was supposed to be quick and decisive. No one at senior levels of the Bush administration imagined that it might prove to

be protracted and debilitating—nor did any of the neoconservatives or neoliberals who proclaimed the wisdom of President Bush's new doctrine of preventive war and were eager to have a go at Saddam Hussein.

The hawks did not view Baghdad as a destination. They saw it as a way station. U.S. forces would arrive, depose the dictator, and then quickly move on to tasks of even greater urgency: bringing Iran and Syria to heel, engineering the transformation of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, then turning perhaps to the Horn of Africa, to Pakistan, and to Central Asia. Ultimately the United States would pacify the entire Islamic world, while not so incidentally putting other would-be adversaries like China on notice. Along the way, it would establish important new precedents and carve out for the United States prerogatives permitted no other nation. This project would also educate the American people as to the nation's proper responsibilities and cement the authority of those who directed national-security policy.

The members of this national-security elite fancied themselves architects of history. Just as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the creation of NATO in the late 1940s had set an azimuth that the United States followed for decades thereafter, so too regime change in Baghdad promised in a single stroke to reorient—even revolutionize—U.S. policy.

But there was more. Unlike Truman's strategy of containment, which in effect had entailed an amoral accommodation with communist tyranny, the offensive orientation of this new strategy held out the prospect of eliminating evil from the face of the earth. This time there would be no "long twilight struggle"; instead, righteousness was certain to prevail.

A perverse sort of genius informed this vision. Bristling with megalomania, it also reflected a profoundly American sensibility: an insistence that it was

incumbent upon the United States to set things right and that the world would surely accept and even embrace the American dominion that resulted. Have we not, after all, always stood for freedom?

Alas, the doctrine of taking the offensive ran aground almost immediately, lost its momentum, and has never recovered. The Bush administration and its supporters have spent the past three and half years trying to deny this fact or searching for ways to work around it.

During the transition from summer to fall, further denial became impossible. Even the generals now know that victory is not the cards—they have quietly redefined "winning" as holding out long enough for the Iraqis to take over the fight.

How long U.S. forces can sustain their current holding action is now emerging as a pressing question. As if to emphasize the growing scarcity of troops, the Pentagon in recent weeks has both extended the tours of units already in Iraq and moved up the deployment dates of units back home that are headed for the war zone.

Meanwhile, the once crack Third Infantry Division, preparing for its third Iraq tour, has two of its four brigades without tanks or other heavy equipment. The Army's chief of staff complains that army depots are clogged with 600 battle-damaged and worn-out Abrams tanks and 1,000 Bradley Fighting Vehicles awaiting repair. The Army lacks the money to fix them—this despite the fact that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have now cost an estimated \$500 billion.

Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, recently let the cat out of the bag. Asked to assess the progress in Iraq, the general replied: "Given unlimited time and unlimited support, we're winning the war." Abizaid is no fool: he knows that the time allot-

ted for this war is running out and that his available resources are permanently constrained.

The distressed condition of the U.S. military only makes the findings of the NIE on "Trends in Global Terrorism" the more devastating. All of the sacrifices of American soldiers in Iraq have served only to exacerbate the problem of Islamic radicalism. The U.S. presence in Iraq, the NIE reports, is "breeding deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Islamic world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement." We're in a deep hole, and "staying on the offense" has only made it deeper still.

Those on the outside who once clamored the most insistently for war have by now largely turned on President Bush, accusing his administration (not without justice) of mind-boggling incompetence.

Among the insiders who sold Mr. Bush on his offensive strategy, those who remain in office—like Rumsfeld or Vice President Cheney—have been largely discredited. A handful of other survivors, pre-eminently Condoleezza Rice, have distanced themselves from their prior ideological enthusiasms. Chameleons do well in politics.

Among the many who have moved on, few rise to the president's defense. Some foolishly pen self-exculpatory memoirs that no one takes seriously. Others keep their silence, whether out of prudence or as penance we cannot say.

As the evening of his presidency approaches, George W. Bush alone persists, armored in ignorance and resolve but adamant that from perseverance will come victory. Were it not for the wreckage that he has strewn in his wake, one might almost feel a twinge of sympathy for the man. ■

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# Exit Stage Right

Democratic votes, conservative victories?

By W. James Antle III

UNDER ORDINARY circumstances, a *Washington Monthly* symposium calling for an end to the Republican congressional majority might be interesting to read but not terribly surprising. The noted liberal magazine would be expected to welcome the idea of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. What attracted attention was the fact that the October cover package was entirely written by prominent conservatives, fed up with their party after 16 years of nearly uninterrupted rule on Capitol Hill.

"As a conservative who's interested in the long-term health of both my country and the Republican Party," Bruce Bartlett began, "I have a suggestion for the GOP in 2006: lose." Longtime conservative activist and direct-mail guru Richard Viguerie estimated "that 40 percent of conservatives are ambivalent about the November elections or want the Republicans to lose." Christopher Buckley, son of William F., confessed that he wrote in George H.W. Bush in 2004—just like liberal Republican Sen. Lincoln Chafee—and harbors "the guilty hope that my party loses" this year and again in 2008.

For the past year, the polls have shown that a large number of voters wish to bid the Republican Congress farewell. Now an increasing number of conservative activists and intellectuals are entertaining the same heretical thought. "What we need," a GOP Capitol Hill staffer leans forward and whispers, "is to get our asses kicked."

Not all of these disgruntled conservatives are as alienated from their party and movement as Jeffrey Hart, who

wrote that "Bushism has poisoned the very word [conservatism]." Hart's fellow *National Review* senior editor Ramesh Ponnuru has been a strong supporter of President Bush. Yet he penned an op-ed for the *New York Times* suggesting that it might not be so bad if "one of modern conservatism's signal political accomplishments"—the 1994 Republican takeover of the House of Representatives—was reversed this fall.

"It would be worse if Republicans actually gained seats," Ponnuru wrote. "The Congressional wing of the party lost its reformist zeal years ago and has been trying to win elections based on pork and incumbency." Ponnuru's colleague Jonah Goldberg agreed that if the Democrats won, "the silver lining would be fairly thick," though he stopped short of endorsing that outcome. Goldberg concluded, "As Henry Kissinger said in 1986 of the Iran-Iraq war: Too bad they can't both lose."

That sentiment may be strongest on the small, beleaguered antiwar Right. It seems unlikely that congressional Democrats would de-fund the Iraq War—there are too many liberal hawks and a de-funding bill in the House has few cosponsors—the way their forebears cut off money for Vietnam and thwarted President Reagan on aid to the Contras. But Republican losses would go a long way toward discrediting the Bush doctrine.

While it is easy to see why conservatives who have abandoned the GOP over Iraq might welcome the party's defeat, what do members of the Beltway Right

stand to gain from a Democratic Congress? Based on the current polling data, Democrats are projected to win the House by a slender margin while the Republicans narrowly retain the Senate, which has the power to confirm judges. With a majority of ten seats or less, House Democrats will have an extremely difficult time writing their policy preferences into law. But they will see their liberal party leadership become household names.

In addition to Pelosi as speaker, abiding by seniority rules would produce a very liberal committee-chair lineup. Congressman Charlie Rangel would ascend to the top spot on the House Ways and Means Committee, giving him the jurisdiction to agitate for higher taxes. John Conyers is poised to take over the Judiciary Committee chairmanship. Along with John Dingell, Henry Waxman, and Alcee Hastings, these high-profile Democrats seem as likely to alienate moderate swing voters as Tom DeLay. And conservatives hope that Democratic investigations of the Bush administration will prove as unpopular as the Republicans' anti-Clinton hearings in the 1990s.

Conservatives whose motivations are more anti-statist than anti-leftist have additional reasons to seek a changing of the guard. It has been ten years since congressional Republicans last attempted significant federal spending reductions. Even modest cuts to offset new expenditures have to be wrung with great difficulty from the GOP leadership by angry conservative



House backbenchers. It isn't because Republicans are trying and failing to rein in spending, as was at least arguably the case during the Reagan administration—the government growth is happening by design.

"Despite the failures, one had the sense that the party at least knew in its heart of hearts that these *were* failures, either of principle or execution," Christopher Buckley wrote in *The Washington Monthly*. "Today one has no sense, aside from a slight lowering of the swagger-mometer, that the president or the Republican Congress is in the least bit chastened by their debacles."

Small-government conservatives are ready to conclude that their attempt to curb Washington's appetite through a majority that was supposed to be ideologically congenial—that is, entirely Republican—has failed. Now they recall wistfully the bad old days of Bill Clinton, when discretionary spending grew at half the rate that has prevailed under Bush and are ready to try divided government instead. Who knows? A time in the wilderness may even give the GOP a chance to come up with an agenda other than self-preservation.

"A straight loss ... would make the Republicans hungrier and sharpen their wits," Ponnuru argued. "Freed from the obligation of cobbling together thin majorities for watered-down legislation, Republicans would be able to stand for something attractive."

Be careful what you wish for, counters John J. Pitney, professor of government at Claremont McKenna College. "I don't think the case for losing to win is entirely without merit," Pitney says. "But I remember what it was like the last time Republicans were in the minority."

After all, what looks likely to be a small GOP loss now could become a big defeat on election day, especially if conservatives don't turn out. With Republicans faltering in Virginia and Tennessee,

the Senate no longer looks as secure as it once did. If the Democrats win both houses of Congress, their fundraising capabilities—and their ability to hold onto power—will increase dramatically.

It also strikes some conservatives as unwise to bet so heavily in favor of Democratic overreach and ineptitude. The party leadership may already be planning to sidestep easily avoidable pitfalls. There have even been reports that many of the more liberal ranking members may be passed over for committee chairmanships to foil a predictable Republican line of attack. Citing a character from "Law & Order," Pitney quips, "Crazy ain't stupid."

Speaking at a breakfast for journalists organized by *The American Spectator*, Congressman Mike Pence, chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, argued that a Democratic victory would be counterproductive. "We need more of us, not more of them," he said. Pence even held out hope that a reduced GOP majority would actually be more conservative. "We are a majority of a majority," he said of congressional conservatives. "We're not yet a majority."

A caucus that is smaller, chastened, and more conservative may be a lot to wish for. The three endangered moderate House incumbents running in Connecticut are all leading their opponents. The three vulnerable conservatives seeking re-election in Pence's Indiana are all trailing theirs. But Pence isn't the only conservative encouraging Republican voters to stay the course.

"There is no choice because the alternative is horrible," Dr. James Dobson insisted to the *Los Angeles Times*. Dobson is an influential social conservative but not a very politically savvy one. In 1998, an election cycle in which the GOP had done more for the Religious Right than in this one, he threatened to bolt the Republican Party and admitted

to voting for Howard Phillips over Bob Dole two years earlier. Now he claims Republicans must be re-elected at all costs.

Yet it is true that a Democratic majority would be risky, especially on immigration. De facto open borders are a major reason for conservative disenchantment with Bush, but House Republicans have held the line against amnesty. Democratic gains "improve the chances of something like the Senate bill," says Pitney. Or worse—some Democrats oppose even that bill's token concessions to pro-enforcement legislators.

Besides immigration, the House has for all its faults been better at passing conservative legislation—tax cuts, budget offsets, abortion restrictions—than the Senate. Some conservatives argue that a GOP House is more important than a nominally Republican upper chamber. Others point out that Republican losses will enhance the case for moderate presidential contenders like John McCain in 2008.

Nevertheless, conservative gains have often followed Republican electoral setbacks. Ronald Reagan would not have been elected in 1980 if Gerald Ford had won a full term in 1976. Republicans probably wouldn't have captured Congress if George H.W. Bush had won re-election in 1992.

And where would the conservative movement be if the GOP had gone with a viable Rockefeller Republican in 1964 rather than suffering a landslide defeat with Barry Goldwater? That movement is today weighed down by big-government conservatism and George W. Bush's foreign policy. A Republican loss would be the best way to repudiate both crippling trends.

It is easy to imagine how a resurgent Democratic Party might make things worse. But how can rewarding the current Republican majority make things any better? ■

# Christians in the Crossfire

Pro-war evangelicals have made exiles—and martyrs—of Iraqi believers.

By Doug Bandow

THE KILLING IN IRAQ continues, and support for the occupation is waning even among Christian conservatives. It would likely fall further if they were aware of what Fred Markert, director of Terra Nova missions, calls the “horrible, horrible climate for Christians in Iraq.”

Before the invasion, Christians argued over the criteria of a just war. But Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, asked another question: had war supporters “thought about their obligation to the Christian community in Iraq?”

Most leading evangelicals seemed to accept blithely the administration’s war rationale. For instance, Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson said President Bush’s arguments justified the invasion: “Of course, all of this presupposes solid intelligence.” Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, pointed to Saddam’s development “at breakneck speed of weapons of mass destruction he plans to use against America and her allies” and the “direct line from those who attacked the U.S. [on 9/11] back to the nation of Iraq.” D. James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, blustered, “Why any churchman would choose to support [Saddam Hussein] rather than to support our own president, I don’t know.” Pat Robertson proclaimed that “carping criticism” of President Bush “amounts to treason.” James Dobson of Focus on the Family opined, “Saddam Hussein must be stopped. Appeasement of tyrants is

never successful.” Gary Bauer, chairman of the Campaign for Working Families, said, “Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was a hell hole of torture and mass murder” and “he allowed Iraq to become a safe haven for terrorists.” Rev. Jerry Falwell wrote an article entitled simply: “God is Pro-War.” In his view, “Christians must live as Galatians 6:2 instructs: ‘Bear ye one another’s burdens.’”

About the only Christian leader who considered the fate of her Iraqi coreligionists was Roberta Combs of the Christian Coalition, who declared in November 2003: “In the new country, under the new democracy, why should the official religion be Muslim? I think as Iraq becomes a democracy, there are going to be a lot of churches springing up.”

Alas, most of these arguments proved to be illusory. The result is a tragic irony for Christians: while the invasion opened Iraq to evangelism, it also unleashed a violent tsunami that is driving many believers abroad. As Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, observes, evangelicals strongly supported the war yet “their cobelievers are suffering as a result.”

Unsurprisingly, Saddam Hussein did not exactly provide a warm home for Christianity. Nevertheless, Samuel Rizk, a spokesman for the Beirut-based Middle East Council of Churches, noted in July 2003: “There’s not much you can say about the old regime. But one thing you could say is that Christians enjoyed freedom to worship.” Hussein used Christians to help provide political bal-

ance. Still, living under a brutal dictatorship and international sanctions is hard, and the number of Christians fell from 1.4 million to 1.2 million or even fewer during the 1990s.

Saddam’s ouster led to a dramatic increase in indigenous evangelism and an influx of foreign Christians, including American troops. “A lot of Iraqis were seeing Christianity for the first time,” observes Jim Jacobson, president of Christian Freedom International. The result was an “explosion of conversions” and “underground, nondenominational churches.” However, notes Mindy Belz, international editor of *World*, that growth “tapered off as things have gotten worse.”

In short, “there is a very important window of opportunity,” as Jacobson puts it, which “probably will close soon.”

Many Iraqi Christians fear that this window has already shut. Solaka Enweya, who fled to Syria with his three sons, told the *New York Times*: “When we heard that the Americans were going to liberate Iraq, we were so happy. Yet our suffering has only increased.”

So far the government does not itself oppress, but Christians live—and die—in fear. They are targeted for robbery, extortion, and kidnapping because of their perceived wealth and the belief that they likely have foreign relatives with money. Christians also suffer from insurgent and sectarian violence. Car bombs don’t discriminate; U.S. translators are killed irrespective of their religion. Carl Moeller of Open Doors USA

says, "Christians find themselves literally caught in the crossfire."

Iraq's Christian leaders commonly argues that Christians are targeted no more than Muslims are. But even if that is true, Christians are uniquely vulnerable because their religious communities and geographical enclaves are much smaller. Nor do they possess an armed militia for defense. And most observers believe this claim to be a vain attempt to reduce Muslim attacks and Christian fears. After visiting Iraq, Lawrence F. Kaplan of *The New Republic* wrote: "however much the clergy may deny it, Iraqi Christians suffer for their faith." Carl Moeller agrees: "Christians are targeted specifically for being Christians." CFI warns of "a silent reign of terror" against Iraqi Christians.

Most Iraqi Christians feel like human targets. One problem is identification with America, even though Washington has been reluctant to offer any assistance. Notes business analyst Glen Chancy: "Evidencing too much concern for Iraqi Christians, it is feared, would reinforce the idea that the U.S. is fighting a 'war on Islam.'" But the real issue is that they are not Muslims. Younadam Kanna, elected to the Iraqi parliament in 2005, told Kaplan: "The fanatics ... blame us for being Christian." Earlier this year Chaldean Catholic Bishop Rabban Al Qas of Amadiyah and Erbil said church bombings were part of "the continuing attempt by Arab fanatics to push the Christians out of Iraq."

Attacks on Christians started early and have steadily increased. In February 2004 Paul Marshall of Freedom House warned that one sign of increasing Islamic extremism was the targeting of religious minorities. The co-ordinated bombing of five churches in mid-2004 triggered the first mass exodus of Christians overseas, perhaps 30,000 to 40,000.

Car bombs were soon used around churches. By Christmas 2004, people feared attending religious services.

Violence also escalated against shops that sold alcohol and music, most of which were owned by Christians. Their stores were bombed and robbed; owners were kidnapped and murdered. Christian women were harassed for not wearing hijab. Some had acid thrown on them or were killed.

George Mushe, a Chaldean Catholic who fled from Baghdad to Istanbul with his family of five, told freelance journalist Yigal Schleifer, "Before the war they looked at us as different, but we could go to church, to work." Afterwards that became impossible, since if you leave your family "you don't know if you will see them again."

Iraqi Christians tell wrenching stories that are repetitive in their barbarity: fathers murdered, children killed and maimed, relatives kidnapped and tortured, families imprisoned at home, businesses destroyed, jobs lost, churches abandoned. The Christians of Iraq website includes an 18-page list compiled by historian Fred Aprim of violent acts beginning in April 2003 and running through July 2006.

Although violence is worst in Baghdad, it reaches even into Kurdistan, where the political authorities are hostile. Last year, reported Kaplan, the Kurdish religious affairs minister said, "those who turn to Christianity pose a threat to society."

Although virtually all Iraqi Christians were pleased to be rid of Saddam, some now say the unthinkable: they were better off under him. Even Richard Land told me that it is "very sad and tragic" that "Christians have had their level of suffering increased by the overthrow of Saddam." Shea and Rayis were more blunt: "The Chaldo-Assyrians have endured much throughout the last century in Iraq, including brutal Arabization and Islamization campaigns. But this current period may see their last stand as a cohesive community" before the

Christian minority is "driven out of its ancestral homeland."

Many Christians have fled, especially to Syria, despite its bad reputation in America. In contrast, the U.S. accepted barely 200 Iraqi Christians last year. The administration simply denies the existence of religious persecution since doing otherwise would suggest that its Iraq policy was failing, explained *The New Republic's* Kaplan.

Estimates of the number of Iraqi Christian refugees vary widely. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees figured that roughly 36 percent of the 700,000 Iraqis who had fled to Syria as of March 2005 were Christians. Bishop Andreos Abouna recently estimated that about half of Iraq's pre-war 1.2 million Christians had left the country. However, Mindy Belz says, "I tend to question those numbers, though I don't have any way of refuting them." For instance, these estimates might not reflect the growth of evangelical congregations. Todd Johnson, director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, believes that "some of the slack has been taken up by independent churches." Still no one doubts a substantial Christian exodus that could eventually eliminate the historic Iraqi Christian church. Johnson told me that "emigration is really the biggest thing" in Iraq today. Standard statistical projections are of dubious value in a nation convulsed by conflict: "many have fled in the last three to four months," he notes.

Will they return? Bishop Abouna retains some hope—"once stability returns." But an authoritarian Shi'ite state would provide the wrong kind of stability.

The problem is not confined to Iraq. Carl Moeller says that the actions and words of the U.S. government "have caused great harm to Christians on the ground all over the Muslim world." Similarly, Jim Jacobson observes that



"everything we do has become much more difficult and dangerous because of Iraq." Radical Islamists "can't strike at us, so they strike at people they think of as surrogates for us," he adds.

Afghanistan's threat to execute Christian convert Abdul Rahman this spring was "a huge wake-up call for a lot of people in the evangelical Christian population," notes Jacobson. It demonstrated that "democracy isn't the only answer and it does not resolve problems of religious persecution and problems of the heart."

Oddly, the American evangelical leadership that campaigned for war has paid little attention to the catastrophe enveloping Iraq's Christians. Few notables acknowledge any need to rethink the war. Chuck Colson and Pat Robertson said they were too busy to comment. Roberta Combs and D. James Kennedy failed to respond to my calls. Schedulers for Rev. Falwell and Dr. Dobson at least made an effort to accommodate my request for comment.

Richard Land acknowledged the problem of increased violence, though he contended that Christians "are not being treated any differently than Muslims in Muslim on Muslim violence." Michael Cromartie, vice president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, made a similar argument: "the fact of the matter is that a lot of people are being shot and were being shot before" by Saddam. "In Iraq everyone is getting killed," so he doesn't consider Christian persecution to be a "tragic irony," even though it "is a horrible situation."

Land defends his support for the war, blaming current problems on the inadequate numbers of troops, "one area of Bush policy that I have disagreed with from the beginning." But is there something more? Land acknowledges that building democracy in the Mideast "is going to be difficult." But it "is difficult in large parts of the world," like

Yugoslavia. Despite all the problems, Iraq "is a battle that we cannot lose," he believes.

Cromartie seems a bit more pessimistic. He says he is listening to the ongoing conservative debate over whether "there is a culture that can be democratized" in the Mideast. He acknowledges that "culture and tradition are very important and need to be weighed before trying to reshuffle the decks of a very nasty place." Obviously, we can't "believe that the opening of a society means it will stay open."

Gary Bauer forthrightly acknowledges that "this has been one of the things that has really troubled me, and I'm a strong supporter of what the president is trying to do." Although Bauer had thought building democracy in the Mideast "would be a positive development," it is evident that we are not "dealing with a people who have a concept of Western values and the value of liberty." In the Middle East, when people make democratic decisions they end up "persecuting those of different religious persuasions." The experience in Iraq has "really pointed out the shortcomings" in the administration's policy, despite "the noble goals."

Several evangelical leaders with experience in the region point to the administration's failure to recognize the power of culture and religion. The expectation of easily planting liberal democracy abroad was "naïve," says Richard Cizik, ignoring "very deep suspicions of American power." Carl Moeller notes that it "is a far more nuanced and complicated situation in the Mideast than many Christians and Americans understand." Fred Markert is even more direct. "The idea of freedom is at the very core of the Gospel message. The opposite philosophy is at the core of the Koran." He doesn't believe that liberal democracy can take root until local people and institutions are transformed

through Judeo-Christian ideas, a process that "there is no way to fast track." Military intervention just "can't solve problems of the human heart."

Given this reality, Cizik told me that "evangelicals need to be really careful not to identify themselves with Caesar." Today, alas, "evangelicals are perceived by Muslims in the Mideast as being in league with the Pentagon. The soldiers come first and then the missionaries," he explains. In the case of Iraq, "Evangelicals trusted the president's perception of the threat. I was wrong. Without casting blame, the threat was misunderstood, and some would say purposefully."

U.S. policymakers may not give much consideration to the status of foreign Christian communities. But religious activists, especially evangelicals who talk about spreading the Gospel, should make fellow believers a high priority.

At the time of the Abdul Rahman controversy, Tony Perkins, president of Family Research Council, argued, "Religious freedom is not just 'an important element' of democracy; it is its cornerstone." If Islamic states "don't democratize in a way that protects religious freedom, it's almost not worth doing."

Sadly, that appears to be the case in Iraq. Writes Paul Marshall of Freedom House, the U.S. risks presiding "over the demise of one of Iraq's, and the world's, most ancient religions and peoples." Evangelical leaders might still believe that the Iraq War was worth supporting. But they should reflect seriously on what has happened to their fellow believers. As Catholic Archbishop Louis Sako of Kirkuk said earlier this year, Iraq's Christian community is becoming "once again a church of martyrs." ■

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# George Winston Bush?

Invocations of Munich and a parade of new Hitlers won't be enough to convince Americans that this is a good war.

By Leon Hadar

*SIR—Please do not ever mention George Bush. And Winston Churchill in the same sentence again, even if you must break all the rules of grammar to do so. Steve Pettit, California (Letter to the editor, The Economist, May 25, 2006)*

BASIL FAWLTY is not a political consultant, nor does he play one on television. But I wish George W. Bush and his loyal band would follow the advice dispensed by Basil, the owner of the Fawltly Towers hotel, during episode six of one of the best-known British television comedies of all time. “Don’t mention the war!” Basil, the irascible Torquay hotel owner played by John Cleese, warns his crew after learning that a group of German tourists are staying there.

Unfortunately, after receiving a knock to the head rendering him even less sensitive than before, Basil cannot stop mentioning the war at every opportunity, upsetting the German guests more and more. In one memorable scene he is goose-stepping around the dining room and rapidly descending into a fit of xenophobic ranting about everything and everyone that most Germans would rather forget. When an angry German asks Basil to stop going on about the war, he reminds him that they started it. “We did not start it,” protests the German. “Yes you did, you invaded Poland,” replies Basil.

Like Basil who can’t stop mentioning the war, the Bushies haven’t been able to stop exploiting the same war and its

“lessons” since the World Trade Center collapsed. In fact, during one of his many press conferences held just one day after the attack, New York City mayor and Bush ally Rudolph Giuliani told the crowd that he had been reading historian John Lukacs’s book *Five Days in London*, which delves into Winston Churchill’s decisions during what the author considers a critical moment in the history of World War II.

At first it sounded to me like Mayor Giuliani, inspired by how Churchill and the people of London reacted during the war, was trying to lift the morale his fellow New Yorkers. Nothing wrong with that. But then the cynic in me was reminded that Giuliani was considering running for the White House and his heroic Churchill-like pose would clearly be more stirring in a campaign television commercial than comparing himself to this or that Lord Mayor of London responding to the devastation of his city by an IRA terrorist bomb.

But then I didn’t know Winnie. Winnie wasn’t a good friend of mine. Perhaps there was something very Churchillian in Hizzonor?

John Lukacs, whose book Giuliani was reading around 9/11—the mayor actually carried the book with him, at least when television cameras were around—knows quite a lot about Churchill and in an interview with *Newsweek*, ten days after the 9/11 attack, made it clear that no, Mr. Mayor, you’re not Churchill, Osama bin Laden is not Adolf Hitler, and the war on terrorism is

not World War II. “I’m very pleased that Mayor Giuliani held up my book. That was very pleasant,” Lukacs, an old-world-style gentleman, told *Newsweek*. “But I don’t think there are any parallels. This crisis we now face, no matter what the president says, is not a war. It’s not the first war of the 21st century. A war is something between nations or states or sometimes even tribes. Who are we going to declare war on?” Declaring “war on terrorism” was “just rhetoric,” Lukacs explained. “But aren’t there parallels between what Churchill was facing as a leader and what George W. Bush was now facing?” the magazine interviewer insisted. And how about the way George W. Bush was carrying himself? Doesn’t he have the stature of a Churchill? Bush and Churchill “are very different personalities,” the Hungarian-born historian, who lived in Europe during World War II, patiently noted. “And this is really not the time to criticize a president, but neither his capacity nor his character is comparable. And character is what counts. Intellect without character is not worth anything.” Ouch.

Sounding a cautionary note, Lukacs went on to tell *Newsweek* that Bush and his aides “should use more sober language instead of talking about crusades. The trouble with people who use this kind of rhetoric is that they don’t even know that it’s rhetoric.”

But since 9/11, through the hunt for Osama bin Laden (“Wanted: Dead or Alive!”), the search for Iraq’s WMD (“mushroom cloud”), the anticipation of

the welcoming of the American “liberators,” and the counterinsurgency in Iraq (“Bring ‘em on”), much of what the Bushies and their neoconservative cheerleaders have been pursuing has given rhetoric a bad name, including the celebration of the many “tipping points” in post-Saddam Mesopotamia, the efforts to help Iraqis “build a democracy,” and the alleged success in “making progress in the march of freedom” in the Greater Middle East and entire universe. As Churchill expert Lukacs pointed out, the kind of empty rhetoric that disguises a disastrous policy, that involves speaking “grandiloquently” and talking “in general terms,” is certainly not a Churchillian trait.

But in the neocon fantasyland that has substituted for real foreign policy since 9/11, why shouldn’t the White House spinners try to liken Bush to Churchill, confident that a submissive press corps would embrace the perverted but powerful historical analogy? After all, Bush once admitted to TV host Oprah Winfrey, “I love Churchill.”

And here was Bush seeking “regime change” in Iraq, despite criticism that he should give negotiations with Saddam Hussein another try. Wasn’t he emulating Churchill, who was also derided in the 1930s for opposing the appeasement of Hitler? Or in the words of Rumsfeld, the primo WWII-buff in the Bush administration: “It wasn’t until each country got attacked that they said: ‘Maybe Winston Churchill was right.’” Here was the Pentagon chief drawing a parallel between Churchill and Bush, the same Bush who had been warned that the U.S. was under threat from al-Qaeda by both the departing Clinton administration and his own security briefings and yet failed to act, which seems to be a very un-Churchillian characteristic. Sure, but as Rumsfeld knows, a robust historical analogy, not unlike potent intelligence findings, shouldn’t be damaged by facts.

“And so, before you knew it, the seeming bozo was our savior,” as Mark Crispin Miller of New York University described Bush’s evolution from an inconsequential and inarticulate Texas governor with no knowledge or experience in foreign policy and national security into a brilliant and towering Churchill. “And he will not waver!” Andrew Card, former White House chief of staff, said at the end of an interview on CNN in October 2001.

“We Will Not Fail,” echoed a *Time* cover story published at the same time, which compared Bush to the British war leader. “[O]ne big thing Bush and Churchill may share,” Michael Elliot gushed in his *Time* profile, “At the times when he was most challenged, and whether he was justified in his sense of self or not (and often he was not), Churchill never knew self-doubt. It seems to rarely stalk Bush. For a man leading the kit-bag-packing troops and a great wide world into a war the like of which it has never known before, that confidence is a useful attribute to have.”

As he attempted to grade Bush’s war oratory, Chris Matthews suggested “When he said ‘Let’s roll’ at the end, I think there is a bit of Churchill in that, in the sense that he was saying, ‘This is not the beginning of the end, it is perhaps the end of the beginning.’”

Well, it was certainly the beginning of a misinformation campaign that would have put Willi Münzenberg into shame. After all, Münzenberg marketed successfully the Soviet Union and Stalin to Western fellow travelers most of whom had never visited the proletariat paradise or met the Soviet dictator. Pundits like Matthews and Elliott live in Washington and schmooze with Bush and his aides on a regular basis.

Yet Bush suddenly turned into Churchill. Osama, Saddam, and any other leader that Bush didn’t like was exposed as a Hitler. And the war on terrorism,

intertwined with the war in Iraq (and Iran?), became World War III against the “Islamofascists.” Indeed, just recently Rumsfeld compared Iraq War critics to the appeasers of Nazism in Europe in the mid-1930s: “It was a time when a certain amount of cynicism and moral confusion set in among Western democracies” and “When those who warned about a coming crisis, the rise of fascism and Nazism, they were ridiculed or ignored,” Rumsfeld told the convention of the American Legion in Salt Lake City. “Indeed, in the decades before World War II, a great many argued that the fascist threat was exaggerated or that it was someone else’s problem” and “Some nations tried to negotiate a separate peace, even as the enemy made its deadly ambitions crystal clear,” Rumsfeld recalled. “It was, Winston Churchill observed, a bit like feeding a crocodile, hoping it would eat you last.” The defense secretary then explained to the audience, which included some WWII veterans, that he was recounting “that history” because “once again we face similar challenges in efforts to confront the rising threat of a new type of fascism.” Today another enemy “has made clear its intentions. ... But some seem not to have learned history’s lessons,” Rumsfeld complained.

And there are some who seem not to have learned the facts of history. They include Rumsfeld, who with his colleague Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, shocked many historians when they compared the anti-American insurgency in Iraq to what they alleged were Nazi guerrillas fighting U.S. troops in occupied Germany. “There is an understandable tendency to look back on America’s experience in postwar Germany and see only the successes,” Rice told the Veterans of Foreign Wars in San Antonio, Texas, in August 2003. “But as some of you here today surely remember, the road we traveled was very difficult. 1945 through 1947 was an especially challenging period. Germany was not immediately



stable or prosperous. SS officers—called ‘werewolves’—engaged in sabotage and attacked both coalition forces and those locals cooperating with them—much like today’s Baathist and Fedayeen remnants.” Speaking to the same group on the same day, Rumsfeld noted the following “facts”:

One group of those dead-enders was known as ‘werewolves.’ They and other Nazi regime remnants targeted Allied soldiers, and they targeted Germans who cooperated with the Allied forces. Mayors were assassinated including the American-appointed mayor of Aachen, the first major German city to be liberated. Children as young as 10 were used as snipers, radio broadcasts, and leaflets warned Germans not to collaborate with the Allies. They plotted sabotage of factories, power plants, rail lines. They blew up police stations and government buildings, and they destroyed stocks of art and antiques that were stored by the Berlin Museum. Does this sound familiar?

If it doesn’t, don’t worry. You’re not experiencing the first signs of senility. As Daniel Benjamin, a leading terrorism expert, commented, “The Rice-Rumsfeld depiction of the Allied occupation of Germany is a farrago of fiction and a few meager facts. ... Werewolf tales have been a favorite of schlock novels, but the reality bore no resemblance to Iraq today.” In reality, Benjamin wrote, werewolf activity amounted to next to nothing—the mayor of Aachen was assassinated before the Nazi surrender. Indeed, as Benjamin pointed out, the organization merited but two passing mentions in the U.S. Army’s official history, “which dwells far more on how docile the Germans were once the Americans rolled in—and fraternization between former enemies was a bigger

problem for the military than confrontation.” Moreover, “there was certainly no major campaign of sabotage and no destruction of water mains or energy plants worth noting,” either. “So, how did this fanciful version of the American experience in postwar Germany get into the remarks of a Princeton graduate and former trustee of Stanford’s Hoover Institute (Rumsfeld) and the former provost of Stanford and co-author of an acclaimed book on German unification (Rice)?” asked Benjamin.

I suppose that these two Bush cabinet officials could blame their speechwriters in the same way that they shifted the responsibility for the fake WMD intelligence onto the CIA. But like the rest of the members of the Bush administration, they are continuing to bombard the American public with World War II analogies and “lessons” as part of the campaign to market the disastrous policies in the Middle East—which will not stop historians from agreeing that the comparison between the role of Bush in combating terrorism with that of Churchill combating Nazi Germany is absurd.

Germany under Hitler had one of the largest and most advanced militaries in the world—to which one could add the military force of Imperial Japan—which by the end of the Second World War was able to bombard London with long-range missiles. Germany was then a great global power with an economic and technological base superior to that of most of its competitors, including Britain. Moreover, “Churchill’s enemy was a powerful, determined dictator; President Bush’s conflict is with a shadowy nemesis and his small band of idolaters,” as one reader argued in a letter to the editor in the London *Times*. Another wrote, “The tragedy of 9/11 was the result of a ‘sucker punch’ landed by a weak enemy on the world’s superpower. A parallel might be the IRA’s Brighton bombing, which almost destroyed a

British Government.” Hence, “compare, if you must, Bush’s reaction to 9/11 to Thatcher’s reaction to the Brighton bomb. It is not by any stroke of imagination comparable to Churchill’s defiance of Nazi Germany.”

Nor does the term “War on Islamofascism” make much historical sense in the context of the war of terrorism and U.S. policy in the Middle East. First, the term seems to jumble together secular nationalist regimes and movements, like the Ba’ath in Iraq and Syria, with religious fundamentalist governments and groups—the radical anti-American (Sunni) al-Qaeda and the Lebanese-based (Shi’ite) Hezbollah; the fundamentalist Sunni Wahabbi movement that is headquartered in pro-American Saudi Arabia and the Shi’ite clerics that rule in Tehran; the anti-Western Muslim Brotherhood movement (including Hamas in Palestine) and the Shi’ite clerics in power in (pro-American?) Baghdad. The Islamofascism label seems to be applied to movements and governments that have nothing in common with each other—much less European fascism.

Unlike al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, or Hezbollah, the fascist movements in Europe in the 1930s were rooted in modern and secular Western ideologies, and their economic nationalist agendas had won many followers in the democratic nations, including the U.S., then beset by the Great Depression. While fascism had strong atavistic roots, not all the political parties associated with it were anti-Semitic. Italy’s Fascist intellectual and political leadership included quite a few Jews, and Mussolini didn’t adopt anti-Jewish policies until he decided to form a military alliance with Hitler when he was under pressure from the Nazi leader. Moreover, Western leaders, including Churchill, regarded Mussolini for a long time as a potential ally against Nazi Germany. Here is what Churchill said about *Il Duce* in 1938: “It

would be a dangerous folly for the British people to underrate the enduring position in world history which Mussolini will hold; or the amazing qualities of courage, comprehension, self-control, and perseverance which he exemplifies.”

In fact, Churchill and his other World War II allies maintained close links to the pro-Fascist regimes in Spain and Portugal and succeeded in persuading them not to enter the war on the side of Hitler. (Spain and Portugal also helped save thousands of European Jewish refugees fleeing the advancing German armies; the two governments also joined the pro-American NATO alliance after the war.) Americans may also forget that the pro-Hitler collaborationist Vichy regime was acknowledged as the official government of France by the United States and other countries, including Canada, even when they were at war with Germany. And can anyone imagine a contemporary Western musician idolizing our latest “Islamofascist” enemy, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the way Cole Porter lyrics, adapted by P.G. Wodehouse for the 1935 London production of “Anything Goes,” did: “You’re the top! You’re the Great Houdini! You’re the top! You are Mussolini!”

But then we shouldn’t forget that Saddam Hussein, the ex-president of Iraq and the leader of its Ba’ath Party—whose political platform mishmashes Arab nationalist, Communist, and Fascist ideological orientations—was for most of the 1980s a strategic ally of the United States in the Middle East. Hence Ronald Reagan ended up providing the man who would become Hitler with economic and military assistance to help him fight Iran’s mullahs and in the process encouraged Saddam to launch what would become the bloodiest war in the modern history of the Middle East. And guess who was dispatched then by Washington to make those deals with Saddam? A hint: it’s a current U.S.

defense secretary who has been comparing critics to those who appeased Hitler.

If the Bushies insist on continuing to mention the war, we can urge them to imagine the following scenario that includes all the historical analogies that neoconservative ideologues like to apply—World War II, Hitler, appeasement. As American and Allied forces invade Nazi Germany in 1945, Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and several SS troops flee to Fascist Spain, where they hide in the Pyrenees Mountains and mount guerrilla attacks against the free French government. The American response? To ask Generalissimo Francisco Franco if he would be kind enough

to send some of his forces to catch those Nazis. Does this sort of alternate history remind you of a certain U.S. administration that allowed Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda associates to flee to Pakistan, where they are now hiding as Washington continues to plead with the military dictator who rules Pakistan to try to capture the evil ones who were actually responsible for the 9/11 terror acts?

Where is your umbrella, George Chamberlain? ■

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# Tour de France

We could learn from the country neoconservatives call our oldest enemy.

**By R.J. Stove**

CONTRARY TO RECEIVED postwar wisdom, Marshal Pétain could be both witty and trenchant. But he undeniably plumbed an abyss of falsehood when, in a 1941 broadcast, he announced: “Frenchmen, you have short memories.” Calling the French amnesiacs is like calling the Japanese milquetoasts. It would be truer to apply to France Saki’s celebrated epigram about the Balkans: the place produces more history than it can locally consume. Two *Esquire* contributors, Judy Jones and William Wilson, got matters right during the 1980s: “The French can recall the pecking order of the Merovingian dynasty ... as clearly as you can remember your last love affair, and they’re likely to be a good deal more entertaining on the subject.”

Such common sense could well be unprintable in that magazine today, and certainly a veritable public-relations nomenclatura flourishes to persuade us of France’s prominent part in any Axis of Evil. Columbia University’s Robert Paxton made mischievous fun in these pages of one such attempt at persuasion: John J. Miller and Mark Molesky’s *Our Oldest Enemy*. Yet the agitprop keeps coming, with an already crowded field having been further enriched in 2005 by Richard Chesnoff’s *The Arrogance of the French* (“this book will open your eyes!” trilled polymath Sean Hannity) and Denis Boyles’s *Vile France: Fear, Duplicity, Cowardice, and Cheese*. (Chances of a book called *Vile Israel, Vile Ireland, or Vile Saudi*

Arabia ever being allowed into stores?) Dignified rebuttals like Bernard-Henri Lévy's *New York Times* complaint about *Our Oldest Enemy*—that it constituted a mirror image of the dead-headed Americophobia he censured at home—met with a two-sentence response from the authors in a *National Review Online* effusion dedicated chiefly to explaining why Americans call the French “frogs.” One wonders if this childishness was ever noticed by *Le Monde* editor Jean-Marie Colombani, who had proclaimed that after 9/11 “we are all Americans now.”

coverage for fear of aiding the Front National.) Strange that those same pundits who yap unendingly, in Iraq contexts, about the dangers of “appeasement” never dared suggest that France’s government was appeasing the thugs who torched 300 cities. No, the thugs were merely exercising their democratic rights against the evil legacy of colonialism, which is all whitey’s fault.

How many of those thugs—whose less murderous antics included scrawling graffiti saying “F-k France”—would have shown their faces at all if Chirac had ordered riot police to fire at will?

starts to prevail in the form of wholesale deporting, it is likelier to come from the social-democrat Left (in France as everywhere else) than from the Stupid Party in its various national manifestations. Howard sought to justify his own anti-union measures by invoking the riots as an instance of what befell countries that lacked such measures. Not a word passed his lips about the rioters’ ethnic or religious background. Besides, which, ultimately, is sillier? The French method of openly furnishing massive unemployment benefits? Or the Howard-Bush-Blair method of pretending that unemployment does not exist; of exporting to the Third World almost any jobs that might exist; and of massaging jobless figures to ensure that one hour’s work per week and 40 hours’ work per week are treated the same?

\* \* \*

That said, it is fair to conclude that for Anglos, contempt of France’s economic policies is really only a second-order issue. What sets Anglos dancing with rage is more often France’s wartime record: its queasiness—until the 1990s—about open discussion of Vichy in particular and Nazism in general. The flip answer to such complaints is Fred Reed’s verdict on French military failure:

I note ... that the French have Germany on their borders, a condition associated with military failure for everybody enjoying the same circumstances. Americans cannot always distinguish between military prowess and the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, a great many Americans cannot find the Atlantic Ocean.

A more detailed answer would involve citing the May-June 1940 Battle of France (90,000 French dead inside four weeks); the catastrophic impact that France’s Western Front hecatomb of

## TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, FRANCE AND AMERICA SEEM NOT INVETERATE FOES BUT RATHER A PAIR OF QUARRELSOME FRATERNAL TWINS.

To the rest of the world, France and America seem not the inveterate foes of Miller, Molesky, Chesnoff, and Boyles’s fantasizing but rather a pair of quarrelsome fraternal twins. Both are, at least by British standards, “proposition nations.” Both prided themselves, until almost yesterday, upon expecting and enabling migrants to assimilate. Both are currently, to different extents, way stations *en route* to the Camp of the Saints. Perhaps, then, a more suitable foreign-affairs guide than spittle-flecked oratory would be Joan Rivers’s rhetorical question: “Can we talk?”

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Everyone knows—not least because America’s mass media have so loudly told us—of France’s political and social crises. Had we not learnt about them, *l’Intifada* of November 2005, the worst threat to French civil society since 1968, would have provided an in-your-face study guide. (It might have been still more effective but for French television executives’ confession, to Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper on Nov. 10, that they censored riot

Clemenceau and de Gaulle, to say nothing of Marshal Macmahon, would not have hesitated for a moment. Faced with such yahoos, they would have ordered enough of a bloodbath to make the Paris Commune’s suppression look like a Spice Girls reunion.

Now that the riots have died down, the true center-right governmental attitude has manifested itself. Interior Minister Nicolas “Sarko” Sarkozy, for all his tough talk during the riots about “hooligans” and “scum,” went on to demand positive discrimination for nonwhites: “I am shocked that there are no nonwhite police chiefs, judges, generals. ... I don’t want to see just one French elite.” Absurd though this is, criticism of it would come better from neocons if their beloved Bush administration had not specifically rejected profiling Muslims at airports.

Moreover, the mania of center-right politicians—Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, José-María Aznar, and John Howard, not to mention the numerous American examples—for cheap labor via indiscriminate immigration ensures that if Enoch Powell-type sanity ever



1916-1917 had on subsequent birthrates; and the fact that the Liberation was nothing short of a civil war, its body count being given by different sources as anything between 10,000 and 100,000. (One alleged collaborator caught up in the *mêlée*—Sacha Guitry, the playwright—lived to joke about his fate: “It was the Liberation, so they threw me in jail.”) To read American laptop bombardiers’ denunciations of Vichy, you would suppose that all the French needed to do to overthrow the Occupation was to listen to Rush Limbaugh. Quaintly enough, postwar politicians of all stripes—from de Gaulle downward—thought differently and favored minimizing the Occupation’s lasting effects rather than opening the Liberation’s wounds afresh. (They also minimized the lasting effects of treasonous communists like Maurice Thorez, but laptop bombardiers seem never to deplore that.) Far from indicating an amnesiac disposition on France’s part, this strategy attested to the power of history over French minds and to how fragile the most basic social contract would be if the genie of mutual postwar recriminating slipped out of the bottle.

What this whole nasty historiographical wrangle demonstrates anew is the silliness of judging a major country at its worst (who could possibly respect an outsider who condemned all America because of Hollywood?) and the need to judge it at its best. Even the most ignorant Francophobes must have some vague concept of what the French can achieve at full throttle, and if they lack such a concept, Fred Reed’s aforementioned article spells it out for them:

Correct me if I’m wrong—did the French not produce Zola, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Laplace, Galois, the lovely prose of Alexis De Tocqueville, and indeed about 12,000 shelf-feet of such like? ... The

French respect intelligence, whereas we are deeply suspicious of it. I’m not sure that intelligence has much place in diplomacy, other than to let one make bad choices in better prose. Still, misjudgment engaged in with class at least makes better reading for later students of history. Whatever their failings, the French do not cultivate boorishness. ... We didn’t either, once.

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What can the French do well? One thing they can do, if not well at least better in the last two decades than at any stage since 1793, is to take seriously decentralization and federalism. Cabinets from 1982 on have felt obliged to give a little administrative independence to the west and south in particular and to make noises about regionalism. Brittany and Corsica now maintain their local dialects—the times are long past when Breton schoolchildren could be thrashed for speaking Breton instead of French—and have their own political parties, varying from mere seekers after autonomy to violent extremists. If Paris tried to demonize all symbols of Breton or Corsican glory the way that successive American legislators have demonized the Confederate flag, it wouldn’t solely be Muslim street kids lighting fires. Even the assassination of Corsican prefect Claude Erignac in 1998 failed to inspire the centralist *force de frappe* against the locals that it would have provoked a generation earlier.

In many areas of French life, France does, admittedly, continue to mean Paris: “beloved monster,” as veteran British journalist John Ardagh called it. Not only are publishers, radio stations, TV stations, and the main performing arts venues Paris-based, but intellectual life tends to be Paris-obsessed, if only because the last attempt (pre-1982, that is) at encouraging a regionalist mystique occurred under

Vichy and thus had to be repudiated afterwards. In theory, Parisians should be suffering from the most unfortunate conformism and self-absorption. One recalls Saul Steinberg’s *New Yorker* cartoon, “View of the World From Ninth Avenue,” and suspects that the Parisian intellectual hothouse must be similar. It is nothing of the sort. Those ghastly totalitarian Frogs—so freedom-hating that they lack even a First Amendment to guarantee them endless gangsta rap and cinematic porn—manage to demonstrate an ideological liberty and seriousness that, for most Americans, are not so much inconceivable as simply obsolete.

They show it in the most unexpected ways. From 1975 to 1990 TV presenter Bernard Pivot presented a sober, fair-minded literary television program, “Apostrophes,” which at its peak had an audience of six million. Each political movement in France has at least one literate newspaper or periodical allied to it. The conventional Left has its *Nouvel Observateur*. The more theoretical Left has *Le Monde*, which once, in its zeal to avoid Eurocentrism, devoted an entire essay to “Why the Filipino cinema isn’t very interesting.” The hard Left has *Libération*. The conventional Right has *Le Figaro*, which occasionally dares to publish Jean Raspail. The classicist-Nietzschean Right of philosopher Alain de Benoist has *Éléments*. The technocrats have *L’Express*. And the Front National has *Rivarol*, this last possibly most significant for its wicked lady cartoonist, who signs herself merely “Chard.”

*L’intifada* gave Chard, predictably, a field day. She skewered the birthright-citizenship doctrine in one sketch that depicted a spectacularly sub-Saharan couple; the woman, obviously about to give birth any second, assured her male partner, “According to the ultrasound, it’s French.” A more recent Chard drawing portrays a grotesque, bespectacled egghead announcing: “Human rights are

for humans, not for fascists.” Le Pen, for all his backslapping persona, has a humanities degree from one of France’s top colleges, although Indochinese and Algerian combat gave him little time or inclination to cultivate his inner wimp. The monthly *Le Spectacle du Monde*, milder than *Rivarol*, always contains earnest discussions on high culture as well as politics. A random sampling of *Spectacle du Monde* back numbers over recent years reveals detailed, lavishly illustrated coverage of the “Lost Dauphin” Louis XVII; Georges de La Tour’s paintings; Talleyrand’s diplomacy; Brahms’s music; Saturn’s moons; Chinese Communism’s horrors; and what is presumably the sole instance on French soil of a John Major glove-puppet.

Down at the shallow end of the gene pool, French tabloids—*Paris-Match*, *Voici*, *Gala*—are quite bad enough but have far tinier circulations than their noxious British counterparts, and their direct political influence is effectively neutralized by French privacy legislation (which sharpens their eagerness to pursue non-French figures like Princess Diana). The idea of any French press baron, even the late Robert Hersant, enjoying Murdoch-type powers over an entire public culture would be nonsensical. Of course, France has its own “anti-racist” demagogues forever bemoaning “hate speech” and invoking the 1990 Gayssot Law against it. But by Anglo criteria they are tame stuff: French multiculti apparatchiks suffer from the fatal handicap of being sincere.

Some of France’s comparative media decorum may be connected with the position of Christian religion in modern France: anomalous but hardly to be ridiculed. Statistics of France’s Christian belief seem to point every which way. Eight out of ten Frenchmen call themselves Catholics—last year Lourdes attracted more pilgrims than Mecca—but only one in ten goes to Sunday Mass.

France’s Catholic episcopate is almost as discredited as the U.S.’s, although for different reasons: not indulgence towards perverted clerics (of whom France is, by American, Irish, or Austrian standards, blessedly free) but its driveling demands for ever more Third World immigrants, plus its open scorn for traditionalism and the Latin rite. The ultra-traditionalist Society of St. Pius X, despite losing several priests recently, attracts almost as many Mass-goers as other French Catholic churches put together.

French Protestantism survives but remains a strikingly reserved, upper-middle-class affair. This hampers it in publicity terms but helps it in moral ones. Gen. William Boykin said of Bush in 2003 that he “was not elected by a

to undergo French language lessons at an elementary school, where his early-20s self was daily surrounded by six-year-olds. No one gave a flying falafel, to quote John Derbyshire’s graphic epithet, about how this experience would affect his “self-esteem.”

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Does all this strike readers as *prima facie* evidence of a land on its last legs, a land that has no future except Mark Steyn cheerily administering Old Yurup’s extreme unction? Possibly. Ardagh, in the last lines of *The New France* (1973), decided otherwise: “The French genius, as we knew it, is going into partial eclipse ... I have faith it will finally reappear—as it has done, repeatedly, ever since Charlemagne.”

**FRANCE HAS ITS OWN “ANTI-RACIST” DEMAGOGUES FOREVER BEMOANING “HATE SPEECH,” BUT BY ANGLO CRITERIA THEY ARE TAME STUFF: FRENCH MULTICULTI APPARATCHIKS SUFFER FROM THE FATAL HANDICAP OF BEING SINCERE.**

majority ... he was appointed by God.” The notion that Chirac was appointed by God would not cut it with Descartes’s countrymen.

For this, France’s schooling system surely deserves some credit. One difference between Bush and Chirac is that the latter speaks grammatical English. Beavis and Butthead would find few French sympathizers. Not only does France’s baccalaureate still make ferocious cognitive demands—though maybe less so now than before 1968—but the country’s whole teaching process takes precious little account of Dr. Feelgood. Instances of French didactic toughness could be multiplied; one will do. An Australian youth was accepted in 2005 as a novice in a French monastery. Alas, though devout, he knew no French. Solution: the monastery compelled him

Each visitor to France has his own quintessentially Gallic anecdote; here is mine. In 1988 I ended up, one night, on the Franco-Italian border, squelching through the snow in my slippers and pajamas because the French train authorities wanted to check all our passports. Among other passengers were two Tunisian males, looking as much like terrorists as central casting could have wished. It was obvious that the Tunisians’ passports had been faked. It was equally obvious that the authorities could not have proved this fakery in a court of law. I shall remember all my life the resigned sigh with which one guard expressed his vexation at being powerless: “*Vous représentez un problème cartésien, messieurs.*” ■

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# Pieties of Silence

In his waning years, Philip Rieff positioned himself as a “remembrancer” in silent protest of modernity’s deathworks.

By Jeremy Beer

BY THE TIME HE DIED on July 1 at the age of 83, Philip Rieff had, quite intentionally, slipped into obscurity. His seminal *Triumph of the Therapeutic* had appeared 40 years earlier, the epistolary *Fellow Teachers* in 1973. Little had been heard from him since. Rieff published just seven articles and reviews in the entirety of the 1980s, and, until the first volume of his three-volume magnum opus was released just a few months before his death, no additional books (if one excepts the fine collection of essays, *The Feeling Intellect*, edited by his former student Jonathan Imber, which came out in 1990). A famously prickly man, he spent his last years in his Philadelphia townhouse, venturing out rarely, seeing few visitors, fiddling with his unfinished manuscripts. He was one of those whose obituary prompts one to exclaim: was *he* still alive?

Yes, he was. And his withdrawal from public life was pregnant with meaning. Rieff could easily have spent his last three decades collecting the usual emoluments and honors of academia, cultivating a school of disciples, perhaps retiring into a position as a well-heeled senior fellow at a prominent think tank. But dropping out was Rieff’s counter-counter-cultural strategy. Whatever else its motivations, it was a singularly honest decision. In *Fellow Teachers*, he noted that Kierkegaard knew that “the one thing” that “would be unambiguously superior to any and all published workings-through” was “a piety of silences.” Not wanting to be “played in

the ideas market,” Rieff wondered whether the “best we can do is to practice the art of silence, specially in this period of over-publication and shouting controversialists.” The rest of his life provided his answer.

It didn’t have to be that way. From his days as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, Rieff had traced a brilliant path of academic stardom. After returning to campus from the Army Air Force, for which he had volunteered in 1943, he was offered a position on the faculty by his tutor, sociologist Edward Shils—even though Rieff had not yet even completed his bachelor’s degree. He took care of that in short order and completed his master’s degree the following year. Now a faculty instructor, he began work on his dissertation, which was to center on the reception of Freud’s ideas in America.

In 1954, Rieff completed his dissertation, which a postdoctoral grant allowed him to restructure into his first book, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, in 1959. By that time, Rieff had scarcely had time to catch his breath; the previous nine years had been a romantic and professional whirlwind. He had become embroiled in a semi-scamandalous courtship with a student, Susan Sontag, in 1950, when the 17-year-old sophomore sat in on one of his courses. Actually, the courtship was hardly long enough to be scandalous: all of ten days passed before the two were married. Nine years later, they were divorced, with Sontag taking their son David with her to New

York. In the meantime, for Rieff there had been an assistant professorship at Brandeis, a visiting professorship at Harvard, a Fulbright professorship at the University of Munich, and an associate professorship at Berkeley.

The whirl calmed in 1961, when Rieff joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania as a full professor. But his meteoric academic rise continued. Just two years after arriving at Penn, Rieff was given a special chair as University Professor. And in 1967, he was installed as the Benjamin Franklin Professor of Sociology. At the age of 44, he was a celebrated full professor at an Ivy League university. In terms of his career, all was well and only promised to get better.

Then came 1968 and all that. To the author of *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, who knew well how hollow were the walls of the old culture, the cultural earthquake might have been foreseeable. Still, its force was apparently greater than he had expected. The academic game now came with a new set of rules and expectations. In fact, now it really was only a game—and not one Rieff would consent to play.

At least one former student has said that Rieff underwent an “inner conversion” during this period. That is not hard to believe. His first post-1968 work, *Fellow Teachers*, putatively presented as a 218-page letter—no chapters, no sub-headings even—to two Skidmore College professors, is radically different in form, style, and tone from Rieff’s previous works. Whereas his prose had once

been exceptionally lucid but scholarly, *Fellow Teachers* is oracular, ironic, shifting, and surprisingly personal. It is an exceptionally dense and aphoristic work, every paragraph an essay unto itself. It is also one of the deepest readings of modernity ever produced by an American writer.

Most importantly for understanding the later thrust of Rieff's thought, *Fellow Teachers* demonstrates that Rieff's conversion had been spiritual as much as intellectual. In this book, Rieff emerges as a self-consciously Jewish thinker, both in the form and in the content of his ideas. For this grandson of an Auschwitz survivor, the countercultural fetish of transgressiveness connoted, distantly but clearly, the Shoah. Indeed, Rieff scholar Antonius Zondervan reports that later in his life, Rieff had written in a grant application, "If I travel, my journey will be to Auschwitz." He did not get the grant, but it was in light of his own growing horror of the triumph of the therapeutic ideology of the gas chambers that Rieff chose to practice, at the expense of his reputation and pocket-book, what he had so recently preached about the art of silence.

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At first, the relationship of Freudian ideas to the breakdown of cultural authority was not entirely clear to Philip Rieff; or at least, he was not entirely clear about the import of that relationship. His first book, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, presents Freud as a heroic realist, author of "the masterwork of the century" whose teaching derived "lessons on the right conduct of life from the misery of living it." We are no longer accustomed to hearing Freud spoken of in such grand, world-historical terms. To cite him today as an authority would be considered eccentric, almost as strange as regarding him as the brilliantly malevolent enemy of all that is sacred. (When

I was doing my doctoral work in psychology in the late nineties, Freud's name was scarcely mentioned, not out of hatred, but indifference. At most he served as a warning against the fruitlessness of "unscientific" theorizing.) But in the intellectual atmosphere of the 1940s and '50s, especially at a place like the University of Chicago, Freud was as omnipresent as Marx.

Originally, Rieff had been more attracted to the latter. A youthful dal-

1959 he could judge it "a good omen" that Freud is "being treated as a culture hero." He even went so far as to commend psychoanalysis for being a "highly moral intellectual movement" intended "to scrape clean the encrusted moral intelligence of Western culture."

Of all modern theorists, wrote Rieff, Freud is "the least confused ... because he has no message." Freud offers no false hope, including no false hope for the "sexual revolution with which some

RIEFF WOULD COME TO THINK OF FREUD AS HAVING CONSTRUCTED ONE OF THE GREAT "DEATHWORKS" AGAINST WESTERN CULTURE. BUT IN 1959 HE COULD JUDGE IT "A GOOD OMEN" THAT FREUD IS "BEING TREATED AS A CULTURE HERO."

liance with a group of Trotskyists brought him to the attention of American intelligence agents, who ensured that as someone suspected of having communist sympathies he was stationed stateside during the war (as an assistant to a brigadier general). But when he returned to Chicago, Rieff decided that Freud was the more insightful cultural theorist, in part because he had the mind of a diplomat, not a preacher. "Unlike Marx," wrote Rieff with approbation, "Freud did not have a religious temperament. He looked forward to no salvations. He was more a statesman of the inner life, aiming at shrewd compromises with the human condition, not at its basic transformation."

This is the Freud of Rieff's first book, in which Freud is praised for offering "truths" but no "truth," for understanding that neither philosophy nor religion offers real consolation, for refusing to be an ideologue in an age of ideology. Decades later, in his last book, Rieff would come to think of Freud as having constructed one of the great "deathworks" against Western culture. But in

misinformed people have linked his name." He is the opposite of the progressive, optimistic Dewey, to whom Rieff compares him invidiously. Freud knew that instinct posed an eternal barrier to liberal dreams of human perfectibility, that no amount of social reorganization could ever alter human nature. His theory of the unconscious also posed a threat to liberal doctrine, for it implied that no man ever really owns himself, complete self-mastery being beyond the capacity of nearly everyone. "We do not find Freud's sense of inevitability congenial," Rieff remarked dryly. "The myth of democratic culture is one of self-confidence and consolation; it is only by accident, we believe, that we are prevented from realizing our fullest selves."

This Freud is essentially a conservative of the skeptical school. But that was not how Freud was usually interpreted by his American followers—which, to Rieff, was precisely the problem. The American neo-Freudians did not share Freud's "conservative respect for culture; they are all too ready to tinker with its machinery of repression in the name of individual fulfillment."



Yet doubts even about the implications of Freud's doctrine rightly understood began to creep up as Rieff's study came to a conclusion. "How much does the decline of prudery invalidate Freud's critique?" Rieff asked, directing his question perhaps to himself as much as his readers. "From what now can Freud liberate us?" Freud's successors were answering that already: we ought to be freed from any and all cultural authorities, any and all hierarchies of aspirations or "morals," any and all constraints, including the constraints of a stable identity. Rieff could foresee a psychotherapeutic tyranny, where everyone is sick and everyone is a doctor. "The hospital is succeeding the church and the parliament as the archetypal institution of Western culture," he observed. Still, he seemed not much bothered by the emergence of what he described as a new, Freud-inspired personality type. "Psychological man," he marveled, was "intent upon the conquest of his inner life," the attainment of "salvation through self-contemplative manipulation." Freud had taught psychological man that reason, faith, and even the idea of progress were inadequate and untrustworthy guides for conduct. This was his great achievement.

Rieff evinces more concern about the "triumph of the therapeutic" in his famous book of that name published in 1966. That work opens with the text of Yeats's "Second Coming"—a sure sign that what follows will not be painted in the sunny colors of American progressivism. Rieff now worried that, though Christian culture had been all but entirely shattered, nothing had succeeded it; there were therefore no extant authoritative institutions whose demands and remissions (the culturally regulated relaxation of those demands) could be internalized, thereby acting to "bind and loose men in the conduct of their affairs." This failure of succession

was no accident but rather the explicit program of the "modern cultural revolution," which was deliberately being undertaken "not in the name of any new order of communal purpose" but for the "permanent disestablishment of any deeply internalized moral demands."

This revolution posed an unprecedented problem, for at the heart of Rieff's theory of culture lies the insight that all cultures consist precisely in a "symbolic order of controls and remissions." Lacking such an order, one gets not a new culture but rather a kind of anti-culture. For that reason, in Rieff's view, therapeutic ideology rather than communism represented the revolutionary movement of the age. Communism inverts religion but accepts, at least in theory, the idea of a social order that embodies certain moral commitments; therapeutic society, on the other hand, stands both against all religions and for all religions. That is, it refuses to engage religious claims on their own terms, to take them seriously as a "compelling symbolic of self-integrating communal purpose." It represents the absolute privatization of religious doctrines, absorbing them as potentially useful therapies for individuals. "Psychological man," remarks Rieff, "will be a hedger against his own bets, a user of any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use."

Indeed, compared to the emergent Western rejection of all "moral demand systems," Rieff notes that communism was, in a certain sense, conservative. Americans, on the other hand, had been released by the anti-cultural doctrine of the therapeutic to be "morally less self-demanding," aiming instead to enjoy "all that money can buy, technology can make, and science can conceive." (This comparison helps explain why self-publicists such as Christopher Hitchens have been able so easily to "switch sides" in our culture wars; their fundamental allegiance is to the globalization

of therapeutic remissiveness, and they realize that that goal is now best served by Western secular liberalism.)

The loss of "corporate ideals," of any communally recognized symbols of authority or guides to conduct, as well as "the systematic hunting down of all settled convictions," began to trouble Rieff, who knew that such an anti-culture had never before existed and was likely not even possible. Still, at this point Rieff was willing to entertain the notion that this attempt to build civilization on the foundation of psychic well-being rather than a system of moral demands (which he would later call "interdicts") and their circumstantial remissions might work. He even concludes his book with the claim that "the new releasing insights deserve only a little less respect than the old controlling ones." It is not clear whether he is being coy.

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*Fellow Teachers* is ironic, but it is not coy. Despite its occasional claims to neutrality with regard to the rise of psychological man, it is passionately subversive of the therapeutic order, especially as that order and its ultimate concern for power was undermining the possibility of genuine teaching.

Rieff's teaching was that the teacher must never take sides in the struggle for power. "We cannot be advertising men for any movement," he writes. "Herald nothing." The vogue for "politically engaged scholarship" was a sham. (Just last year, in an interview with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Rieff was recommending to scholars that they "become inactivists. They'll do less damage that way. Inactivism is the ticket.") Rieff knew that education and politics—the fighting and analytic modes—are incompatible. School must be kept at arm's length from society, he argued, and knowledge from becoming

a public object for as long as possible, lest it be brutally simplified. "The rhythms of teaching and learning are slow and unpredictable; the progress we teachers achieve is hard to couple with the advance of any social movement."

Rieff's deeper task was to reverse criticism, to reveal its game, to show how it depended for its success on that which it sought to destroy. In calling into question all authority, in refusing to take up "the teaching of our inherited interdicts" and substituting instead "the preaching of endless remissions," the teacher-as-critic makes men "free to become what they are not. That freedom is deadly."

The hopefulness that marked *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, even the chastened hopefulness of *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, is completely absent from *Fellow Teachers*. Rieff blanched in the face of a new personality type that was "radically contemporaneous.... This is the uniquely modern achievement. Barbarians have never before existed. At the end of this tremendous cultural development, we moderns shall arrive at barbarism. Barbarians are people without historical memory. Barbarism is the real meaning of radical contemporaneity. Released from all authoritative pasts, we progress towards barbarism, not away from it."

Rieff also saw that both the corporate and technological elites and the cultural radicals were united as partisans of the therapeutic. "The propertied classes, their lawyers and editorial writers, are self-interested, which is not the same as conservative," he scoffed. "Modern culture is constituted by its endless transitionality; the people at the top have learned to want it that way." Furthermore, Rieff wrote, "The destruction of the family is the key regimen of technological innovation and moral 'deviancy.' In particular, it is through hostility to the cultural conservatism of the working-class family that corporate ad-mass cap-

italism and psych-revolutionary socialism are working out the terms of their limited liability, joint enterprise. . . . [P]reserve our hard-hats from the affects of the higher re-education." It is not hard to see why Christopher Lasch claimed Rieff as an influential teacher.

So, then, what to do? In *Fellow Teachers*, Rieff provides only half-serious answers. He calls for the "abolition of the fashion industry." He speculates that severely retributive laws might revive culture. He muses that the question of censorship ought to be revisited. He claims that fear ought to be instilled in the powerful; "fear is not a bad teacher of certain elemental lessons. Love comes after law. Positive acts are prepared by negative commandments."

In such statements we glimpse an author in the process of rediscovering the profound wisdom of Judaism's norms and forms. Rieff conceives of teaching as consisting in the interpretive repetition of sacred texts—is this not an essentially rabbinical conception of education? Then, too, at times the book seems addressed, at least primarily, to Rieff's fellow "Jews of culture," a phrase he employs at least once.

Finally, in *Fellow Teachers* Rieff occasionally reveals an intense disgust with Christianity. Rieff insists that he is no friend of Christian civilization, for which "dead" order he professes "not the slightest affection," precisely because he is Jewish. In fact, one could characterize Rieff's project as wanting to get behind Christianity—not in order to recover Hellenism or paganism but precisely Judaism. For Christian love, he argued, is inherently anti-cultural. "The Christian mystery-cult evolved into the most terrible rationalizing of transgressiveness ever to curse our culture," he fumed. "Nietzsche knew that Christendom's love was a covert form of making war on culture in any form, an expression of the most terrible hatred, envy,

revenge." Later: "Faith in Christ—and the organization of that faith—is ineluctably anti-Jewish."

No cant about "Judeo-Christian values" for Philip Rieff! And no reassuring talk about "Athens and Jerusalem," either. Rieff might have been the greatest partisan of Hebraic civilization America has ever had; he was certainly the most daring in pressing its claims. One can respect him for that. One can also respect his list of the first two interdicts that must be re-cognized (as he would write it) in order to reconstruct our culture: 1.) We "must remain under the authority of death"; and 2.) We must stand "against the re-creation of life in the laboratory and the taking of life in the abortion clinic." This was 1973.

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Aside from occasional essays, *Fellow Teachers* was Rieff's last sustained work of cultural theory until *My Life among the Deathworks* was published in March of this year. No less than *Fellow Teachers*, this work is challenging; but it is also astonishingly direct.

Rieff develops a typology of three "worlds" or cultures that is also a chronology. The first world is essentially that of pagan antiquity; it is no longer psychologically or sociologically available except in pastiche form as a consumer item, and its leitmotif is fate. The second world is essentially rooted in Jerusalem but—Rieff concedes, so far as it is inclusive of the form of Judaic law—also includes Christianity. Its leitmotif is faith. The third world is that which is now being born; it is the anti-culture of the therapeutic, which has come into being through the "deathworks" mounted against second-world interdicts by such third-world figures as Freud, Joyce, Duchamp, and a host of others. Its leitmotif is fiction.

Hitler, too, is a third-world figure, a proponent of the anti-cultural "clean

sweep, the brush aimed first and foremost at the kingdom of priests and holy nation, however members in that kingdom may rebel against their membership." Media notices of *My Life among the Deathworks* have, predictably, focused on Rieff's scorn for multiculturalism, feminism, and "homosexualists." But what is most striking is the extent to which Judaism, Hitler, the Shoah, and the author's Auschwitz-surviving grandfather occupy the almost too visible foreground. The price of therapeutic freedom, Rieff suggests, insofar as it consists in the removal of all authoritative interdicts, those delicately constructed checks against human evil, has already been incalculable.

"My grandfather told me, in Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago, that he wanted to go to Svat, Israel, the town of his great teacher, Isaac Luria, to die. America was to him a land without grace, and he could not die amid such gracelessness," recalls Rieff near the end of the book. "My grandfather saw this de-created world coming; he thought that Hitler had won in some way. The evidence surrounded him: the gross sexuality of the young, the aestheticization of my father's Judaism..." Has Hitler really "won in some way"? Perhaps the question is not as insane as it sounds.

"The commanding truths are Nots," Rieff reminds us, one last time. "As my grandfathers well knew, before permission there must be prohibition." These are the fruits of Philip Rieff's decades-long pieties of silence: to become a "remembrancer," in his terms, of the past, one man's lifework against the deathworks mounted by modernity against all sacred orders. ■

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The Pentagon continues to develop a series of contingency plans to respond to the likely scenarios that the U.S. will face in the event the president orders direct military action against Iran after the November elections. The following scenario, based on intelligence analysis, suggests a rapidly escalating conflict that might only be concluded through the use of nuclear weapons:

If the U.S. conducted an air assault against Iran, the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain, which has a majority Shi'a population that has been strongly influenced by Tehran in the past, would become a prime Iranian target, particularly since the U.S. Navy has a major base there. The Joint Chiefs expect that Iran's national TV would begin calling for an uprising on the island and that U.S. F-16s belonging to Bahrain's air force and military communications centers could easily be taken out through sabotage, making the government isolated and vulnerable. An uprising of fifth columnists in Manama would be able to overwhelm security forces and seize control of government and media centers. The U.S. Fifth Fleet is based at the tip of Bahrain, but if the government became unstable, there isn't much the U.S. could do to prop it up. Manama would become a battlefield and Iran would probably be able to make successful strikes against Bahrain's air defenses, eliminating any ability to resist. Control of Bahrain would give Iran the key to Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf by way of the strategic King Fahd Causeway, whose possession would provide Iran with a land bridge into the region.

Iran's Kilo-class subs, purchased from Russia, would be able to patrol the waters of the Gulf and disrupt key shipping lanes. Since Iran has underground missile batteries for HY-2 Silkworm and Scud C missiles on the southwest tip of Abu Musa Island, it could also hit any point in the Gulf, forcing the U.S. to take those batteries out. Iran would then probably opt to make devastating strikes on the tiny oil-rich emirates lining the Gulf, including the UAE, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, and could also begin to attack Saudi Arabia with a series of car bombs, using high-quality hexogene and the plastic explosive pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PTN). Major terrorist bombings of Saudi targets would begin and could include all major cities and oil-producing centers. Surviving Iranian missiles and small suicide craft would be used to try to close the Straits of Hormuz. By then the U.S. would be forced to broaden the scope of its attacks, striking Tehran as well as all of Iran's other major cities and ports, densely populated areas that would produce thousands of civilian casualties. Another concern is that the Iranians would activate their Hezbollah cells that are presumed to have entered the United States via Mexico since 1984. Such cells, if present, might attack soft targets in the continental United States, to include trains, subways, malls, and sports stadiums. If Iran were to unleash its terrorist surrogates, the U.S. military would probably argue for the use of tactical nuclear weapons to end the conflict.

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*All the King's Men*]

### Kingfish for a Day

By Steve Sailer

AT THE 2005 OSCARS, host Chris Rock asked, "Who is Jude Law? Why is he in every movie I have seen the last four years? Even the movies he's not acting in, if you look at the credits, he made cupcakes or something. He's gay, he's straight, he's American, he's British. Next year he's playing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar."

In response, an even more than usually pompous Sean Penn defended Law as "one of our finest actors." This ensured a slagging by film critics of the new version of "*All the King's Men*," in which Penn plays the Huey Long-inspired populist demagogue Willie Stark and Law his enervated aristocrat press secretary, Jack Burden, who can never quite decide whether that's a gleam or a glint in his boss' eye.

Surprisingly, after endless editing, "*All the King's Men*" turns out to be an intelligent, serious film with memorable dialogue, which writer-director Steven Zaillian (who wrote "*Schindler's List*") largely lifted straight from the book. The famous 1946 novel by poet Robert Penn Warren tends toward the lyrically overripe when Burden narrates but comes alive when Stark opens his mouth, furnishing as many superb lines as we're likely to hear in 2006.

While the new film is not as effective as the 1949 Best Picture version (with an Oscar-winning turn by Broderick Crawford), it is more artistically ambitious. Its flaws are frustratingly numerous but not fatal.

The critics are annoyed that Zaillian has made a Southern political movie that isn't a blatant allegory about George W. Bush or Bill Clinton or Hurricane Katrina. (The film does unintentionally offer insights into another oil-rich populist, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.) Instead, Zaillian sticks faithfully to the novel.

But what a true story Warren had to fictionalize! Huey Long was both the most manic dynamo in American politics since Teddy Roosevelt and a sardonic observer of his own confounding and increasingly sinister career. He rightly observed, "Listen, there are smarter guys than I am, but not in Louisiana."

When Long was elected governor in 1928, Louisiana had the second highest illiteracy rate in the nation and only 300 miles of paved road. In his heroic first two years in office, Long poured money into sensible investments in the state's under-utilized human and physical capital: free textbooks, adult literacy, hospitals, roads, and bridges.

To pay for them, he tried to tax Standard Oil, which "had enough money burn a wet mule," but he was impeached by the old guard. After narrowly surviving, he devoted the rest of his short life to waging war on his political enemies.

The only state that employs the Code Napoleon, Louisiana lacks what Alexander Hamilton praised as "that temperate love of liberty, so essential to real republicanism" more often found in states with an English political heritage. Even as Long grew bored with promoting their welfare, Louisiana's common folk

stood by him, allowing him to evolve into a democratic dictator with near absolute power.

In 1935, Long was assassinated by a well-bred young doctor for reasons that have never been conclusively explained. To make sense of the killer's motives, Warren invented a Southern Gothic subplot about an idealistic yet decadent coterie of the gentry who collide with the governor fatally. Warren imagined himself as Stark's right-hand man, Jack Burden, a former scholar who drowns his lyrical soul with bourbon to forget how his master bends him to his will. Burden's story eventually develops some genuinely tragic momentum, but the film inevitably ends up featuring less of the ferocious Penn and more of the merely adequate Law.

Zaillian blundered by slathering on the gloom from the opening frame, with a lighting scheme reminiscent of Tim Burton's grotesquely nocturnal "*Batman Returns*." James Horner's score is especially portentous. Instead, Zaillian should have played the first half of the story as a comic triumph, in the manner of "*The Man Who Would Be King*," only to turn tragic as Stark is corrupted absolutely.

You might as well wait, however, for the DVD so you can watch it with the subtitles turned on. The flamboyance of the dialogue combined with the all-star cast's various attempts at Louisiana accents render many lines incomprehensible. Oddly enough, the only actual Southerner, Patricia Clarkson, might be the most unintelligible. In contrast, Sir Anthony Hopkins, as always, makes no effort whatsoever to adapt his Old Vic diction to his American character and thus is, as always, perfectly understandable. ■

Rated PG-13.



## BOOKS

[*Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World*, Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman, Pantheon, 200 pages]

# Reconnecting With the Reality-Based Community

By Scott McConnell

AT NO TIME since the Vietnam War has there has been greater domestic discontent with American foreign policy. Large numbers of voters tell pollsters they will vote primarily to express opposition to the Iraq War. Bookstore tables display scores of foreign-policy works. Political talking-head shows of every kind feature debates about America's stance in the world.

Yet paradoxically, this debate seems not to have reached the levels of real political power in Washington. Inside the Beltway, dissent over Iraq is usually framed as dissatisfaction with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's pre-war planning; if Hillary Clinton or a similarly tough-minded Democrat were in charge, preventive wars would be managed more carefully. The Democratic Leadership Council, perhaps the most important foreign-policy faction within the party, has rallied behind liberal hawks like Paul Berman and Peter Beinart, who prescribe policies not noticeably different from the neoconservative architects of the Iraq War.

Surveying this scene, one might conclude that there exists no alternative to the current consensus, or at least none beyond a Left whose critique of American power has been so constant and predictable since 1947 that it is easily passed over. (The semi-isolationist Old

Right is even less visible.) The political center of both parties not only accepts that preventive war against Muslim states should be central to America's strategy against terrorism, it embraces the corollary that the United States uniquely embodies a kind of absolute good in the world that other countries can't begin to match.

This last belief, which has both Christian and secular versions, makes it impossible for Americans to see themselves and their policies as others might see them, a prerequisite for competent diplomacy. It has now seeped into almost every foreign-policy area.

One typical example is cited in Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman's timely and important new book, *Ethical Realism*. Earlier this year a bipartisan task force chaired by John Edwards and Jack Kemp explored American relations with Russia. About one essential thing the class-warrior Democrat and *über*-free-marketeer Republican and the Russia experts they tapped were in complete agreement: American policies toward Russia have been entirely blameless during the 15 years since Gorbachev, and difficulties that have arisen in current relations are entirely the fault of Russia's leaders.

This sensibility, rather than specific misguided Bushian policies, is the main target of *Ethical Realism*. The authors resurrect and seek to revive an alternate philosophy—one radically different and

the stunningly successful American reconstruction of the West after World War II and led to victory over communism without a nuclear cataclysm—is about as far removed from today's Washington as the Han Dynasty.

The policies of the realists are familiar to most. Containment, set out in Kennan's famous "long telegram" of 1946, recast American establishment attitudes towards Stalin's Russia and became the lodestar for Washington's political and economic policies to block further communist advances. Containment always had its enemies on the Left and Right—those who didn't consider communism a threat and those who wanted Washington to press its nuclear advantage before the Russians caught up. Truman had to face down Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who wanted to use nuclear weapons against China during the Korean War. Once elected, Eisenhower had to marginalize the substantial "rollback" faction within the GOP. Pressed to use our nuclear advantage against Moscow, Ike asked, "What would we do with Russia if we should win a global war? ... The colossal job of occupying ... [it] would be far beyond the resources of the United States..."—the kind of question never considered by the current president.

Eisenhower's views were shaped by firsthand experience of war but indirectly by the ways the American establishment thought, which Lieven and Hulsman label

**PRESSED TO USE OUR NUCLEAR ADVANTAGE AGAINST MOSCOW, IKE ASKED, "WHAT WOULD WE DO WITH RUSSIA IF WE SHOULD WIN A GLOBAL WAR? THE COLOSSAL JOB OF OCCUPYING [IT] WOULD BE FAR BEYOND THE RESOURCES OF THE UNITED STATES."**

yet seemingly close at hand—the kind of centrism embodied in the foreign-affairs leadership of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower and represented philosophically by such realists as diplomat George Kennan, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and scholar Hans Morgenthau. It is sad to recognize that this style of thinking about and acting in the world—one that guided

"ethical realism." Kennan outlined its diplomacy, but its ethical view came from Reinhold Niebuhr, the Midwesterner who became American Protestantism's leading theologian. Niebuhr was troubled about the messianic streak in the American consciousness and counseled listeners—who included much of the American political and journalistic establishment—

that “pretensions of virtue are as offensive to God as the pretensions of power.” Hans Morgenthau, the German Jewish refugee who became the nation’s foremost academic realist scholar, likewise warned that “equation between a particular nationalism and the counsels of Providence is morally indefensible for it is the very sin of pride against which the Greek tragedians and the Biblical prophets warned rulers and the ruled ... liable to engender the distortion in judgment which, in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations.”

These men, along with dozens of others—key architects of containment and, later, often opponents of the Vietnam War—fashioned a statecraft that attempted to combine both moral principle and the national interest, trying to remain mindful man himself is imperfect.

The authors explicate major tenets of ethical realism—prudence, which Edmund Burke called the first ranking of political and moral virtues; national humility; responsibility, the notion that

good intentions (“spreading freedom”) do not excuse political leaders from the consequences of their actions; and the study of other countries, which Morgenthau considered a central ethical command. The quip by anti-Vietnam war activist Daniel Ellsberg—that no senior American official in the early ’60s could have passed a freshmen midterm in Vietnamese history—remains true today about Iraq, Iran, and much of the Muslim world. Lieven and Hulsman’s ethical realists speak for themselves, and they are repositories of the collected wisdom of the West, from St. Augustine through Burke and Max Weber.

Much of this book consists of sharp and fresh polemic, pointing out the ways the administration has ignored every positive lesson and successful policy American statesmen adopted during the Cold War. The authors also provide prescriptions, some of which would advance the Washington debate well beyond its current, tired parameters. For example, it may not seem practical for the United States to push a Mideast peace settlement that grants European Union membership to both Israel and Palestine. But it is visionary, and perhaps no more so than the construction of the European Common Market itself was in the years after World War II.

This book is a collaboration between Right and Left, in micro terms a sort of counter-synthesis to the alliance between the Bush administration and the Democratic Leadership Council. Hulsman is a Republican, and before this book made such an association untenable, a leading scholar at the right-wing Heritage Foundation. Lieven, with the New America Foundation, is the highly acclaimed author of *America Right or Wrong*. Their collaboration is not surprising: there is now a good deal of ideological cross-pollination among scholars and analysts alarmed by the Bush foreign policy, most of it going on at a levels that don’t influence policy. (The Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy is an institutional example.)

The Iraq War may be the greatest blunder of Bush’s new un-realism, but it

was a blunder with a long wind-up. Lieven and Hulsman shrewdly quote from British diplomat Jonathan Clarke’s nearly six-year-old review in *The National Interest* of a foreign-policy book edited by Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan. Clarke accused the two of perusing the world, looking for trouble spots America could throw gasoline on. If all the Kristol/Kagan prescriptions were implemented, he concluded, the U.S. would risk fighting a five-front war with no allies at all.

But however easily ridiculed, the mentality embodied by Kristol and Kagan advanced, while the realism sketched out by Lieven and Hulsman lost ground. It may have only been a matter of time before Kagan and Kristol found an administration ready to take up much of their advice.

There is likely an explanation for this in what might be called the marketing of political ideas: how some become dominant and others fall by the wayside. Lieven and Hulsman don’t address it, and the subject may be too complicated for treatment in a short volume. But how did realism become a submerged, almost dissident philosophy amongst American elites, and how did its opposite triumph so completely? Unless one chalks it up simply to the historical caprice of the Bush presidency combined with 9/11, one must consider the motivations of major donors and the myriad factors that determine the acceptable limits of what people in think tanks think. If powerful Americans think differently about the world than they did in the late 1940s and 1950s, an explanation should be sought.

America will soon gear up for another presidential season, and candidates will seek out expertise in areas where they and their staffs are inexperienced. It would be wonderful for the country if leading presidential contenders were to pursue the kind of knowledge and sensibility Lieven and Hulsman convey in this short book and, even better, internalize its lessons. But the chances of that are, sadly, less than overwhelming. ■

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[*The Conservative Soul: How We Lost It, How to Get It Back*, Andrew Sullivan, HarperCollins, 294 pages]

## Separation of Church and Truth

by David Gordon

ANDREW SULLIVAN is a skilled political journalist, and in *The Conservative Soul* he makes some excellent criticisms of current presidential inanities. George W. Bush, he ably shows, has broken sharply with the traditional conservative belief in limited government. Instead, he has acted recklessly, supporting massive increases in spending in order to pursue forcibly what he takes to be virtue; yet, at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, his policies defy moral decency.

Unfortunately, Sullivan does not leave well enough alone. It is not sufficient for him to analyze the current scene. He imagines himself to be a philosopher, and he is anything but that. Much of the book consists of Sullivan's endless musings on religion, sexual ethics, and the meaning—or rather, the lack of meaning—of history. He confuses autobiographical reflections with reasoning.

To indict President Bush is a task well within Sullivan's powers. American conservatism has, with good reason, been skeptical of big government. For Bush, matters are quite otherwise: as he put it in September 2003, "We have a responsibility that when somebody hurts, government has got to move." Bush's unrestrained belief in an omniscient state has led to a "literally staggering expansion of government power. ... In Bush's case, paternalism wasn't a metaphor. It was a commitment worth trillions of dollars of other people's money."

Bush's deviations from conservative principle and sound sense have by no means been confined to financial irre-

sponsibility. In waging his misbegotten war on terror in Iraq and elsewhere, the president has condoned, if not ordered directly, grave moral wrongs: "The use of forced nakedness of detainees, of 'stress positions' that make it difficult for prisoners to breathe or stand, of controlled hypothermia and extreme heat to break down prisoners, of unmuzzled dogs, of sexual abuse and even rape, and repeated beatings: all became widespread in the war on terror."

Sullivan is rightly revolted by these abuses, but he ignores an elementary point. If torture is wrong, then we have a clear case of moral knowledge. The force of Sullivan's condemnation of Bush depends on its being actually the case that torture is wrong. Otherwise, Sullivan would be merely informing us of his own preferences. If Richard Posner responds, as he does in his recent book *Not a Suicide Pact*, that he finds the use of torture an acceptable price to pay for a chance of increased security, Sullivan could not then say that he is objectively mistaken. He could only oppose his own views to his antagonist's.

In what way does Sullivan ignore this point? For him, any claim to moral or religious truth is invalid. He much prefers Montaigne, who "sees basic human disagreement about even basic morality ... as the undeniable fact of the human condition. It has always been thus. ... In one essay, Montaigne even defends cannibalism, when compared to the religious torture practiced by the fundamentalists of his own day."

Does Sullivan really want to say that cannibalism is morally acceptable if a society sanctions it? He notes, following Montaigne, the wide variety of moral practices prevalent in the world: have not some societies, for example, required infanticide? But no more than that estimable writer does Sullivan tell us how from the existence of an abhorrent practice its justification follows.

Sullivan is much sounder in his honest condemnation of torture than in the simple-minded moral relativism and skepticism he defends without argument

—unless, indeed, we are to regard long quotations from Montaigne and Michael Oakeshott as arguments. Sullivan, like nearly everyone else, finds himself with moral beliefs. Are we not perfectly within our epistemic rights to take these beliefs to be true, so long as we have not been given any good arguments against them? We can only start with the beliefs we actually have and proceed from there. Sullivan's facile skepticism blunts the force of his own insight in condemning torture.

Sullivan would, I think, answer that to insist on the objectivity of morality is to ignore the imperative force of conscience. Must not each individual act according to his own sense of what is right? He condemns the pope for daring to claim that conscience must be guided by truth. "In 1991, then-Cardinal Ratzinger delivered an address in Dallas, Texas, entitled 'Conscience and Truth.' He couldn't have been clearer about how an individual conscience is by no means, for him, the final arbiter of morality or truth."

Has not Sullivan neglected another fundamental point? No doubt an individual must do what he thinks to be right; but to say this is to offer no guidance at all to someone perplexed about what in fact is right. The distinction between belief and truth is obvious in factual questions: if asked whether Bush is president, I can only answer with what I think to be true. But my thinking an answer true does not make it true; and even if I correctly report my sincere belief, I may be mistaken. The situation, I suggest, does not differ in matters of morality. Far from being a dangerous innovator avid to overturn Vatican II's stress on conscience, Ratzinger simply reiterated a commonsense point. Sullivan might with profit consult Thomas Aquinas's discussion of the erring conscience in the *Summa Theologica*.

I fear that matters are even worse than I have so far portrayed. Moral skepticism is not enough for Sullivan. He embeds this view within an all-pervasive metaphysical and historical skepticism. Here he follows Michael Oakeshott:

"The most essential quality of human history, he argues, is contingency. ... It is a story of human freedom, of choice in the context of ultimate uncertainty. It has no real direction." Religions and philosophical systems that teach otherwise are not only mistaken but dangerous.

I do not wish, in opposition to Sullivan, here to defend any particular religious or metaphysical view of the world. Rather, I wish to ask, how does he know what he claims to know? He does not grasp that skepticism is itself a view that needs to be supported by argument. His mentor Oakeshott did realize this. In

unable to grasp the simple truth that his policy has failed? In Bush's worldview, "what mattered was the ideological analysis: good versus evil."

Sullivan's argument is unpersuasive, and his analysis of fundamentalism is flawed. He acknowledges that William Kristol and David Frum are among the foremost defenders of the Iraq War, yet neither is a religious believer of the sort that Sullivan condemns. "Fundamentalism" is then not a necessary condition for foreign-policy fanaticism. Neither is it a sufficient condition. Not all believers in absolute truth wish to impose their doctrines by force. Indeed, the Ameri-

views of natural law. Feser adheres to the traditional position, which deduces moral requirements from natural purposes. George, by contrast, follows the "new natural law" teaching of John Finnis and Germain Grisez, which rejects the traditional view as invalidly attempting to bridge the fact-value dichotomy. The decades-long debate between the two positions is lost on Sullivan.

His interest in the issue of sexual morality is no accident; and here I suggest lies the key to Sullivan's insistent denunciation of religious and moral claims to truth. He is by no means an atheist, and he professes a version of Catholicism that places great stress on religious experience. But he is also, as he never tires of telling us, a homosexual, and nothing can be allowed to put in question the rightness of his sexual proclivities. And is this not exactly what the religions he is so quick to denounce do? If there is an absolute truth, he fears that he would be condemned. Much better, then, to embrace a Heraclitian flux than to risk having to re-examine his own conduct.

I have space to note only a few more mistakes. Thomas Paine was not an atheist, but a deist, and far from rejecting all religion was a leading light in a new religion, theophilanthropy. When Sullivan tells us that "the First Amendment guaranteed that religious freedom—and therefore religious diversity—would be integral to the new republic," he ignores the fact that the amendment left the states perfectly free to establish religions as they wished. He mistranslates the Greek word *thymos*.

The discussion of Bush is excellent, and Sullivan's account of his meeting with Oakeshott is well worth reading. Aside from this, and a few other passages, *The Conservative Soul* should be, in Hume's phrase, "consign[ed] ... to the flames." ■

*David Gordon is a Senior Fellow of the Ludwig von Mises Institute and Editor of The Mises Review.*

HE IS, AS HE NEVER TIRES OF TELLING US, **A HOMOSEXUAL**, AND NOTHING CAN BE ALLOWED TO PUT IN QUESTION THE **RIGHTNESS OF HIS SEXUAL PROCLIVITIES**.

*Experience and Its Modes*, which Sullivan mentions but does not discuss in detail, Oakeshott followed F.H. Bradley in contending that the world of experience is riven with contradiction. If so, skepticism is indeed plausible; but, unlike his philosophical master, Sullivan avoids the hard work of defending his views. (Oddly, although Sullivan normally follows Oakeshott, he adopts Leo Strauss's interpretation of Plato's *Republic* without so much as a mention of Oakeshott's very different interpretation.)

Why is Sullivan so eager to embrace a skepticism he has not the remotest idea of how to defend? The answer, I suggest, is that he sees it as the antidote to "fundamentalism," from which he recoils in horror. By fundamentalism, he means religions that claim to be true, not provisionally, but absolutely: "This truth comes from outside the human being who holds it. It is an external truth, brought to him by a book, a sacred text, a mullah, a pope, a guru, a political visionary, or a religious community with an authoritative pastor." Is not fundamentalism of this sort responsible for all manner of evils, including Bush's unbending pursuit of a wrongheaded policy in Iraq? Why is the president

can fundamentalists of the early 20th century for the most part shunned political action. But Sullivan displays little interest in the history of fundamentalism. For him, the word is simply a catchall term for religions he does not like. Thus, he claims that fundamentalist religions preach an imminent end to the world; but this doctrine is no part of the Catholicism of Benedict XVI, which he nevertheless considers fundamentalist. He also ascribes to the "fundamentalist strain" of Judaism doctrines about the coming of the Messiah that are the precise opposite of the dominant view in Orthodox Judaism.

Sullivan does not inquire about the basis of religious truth claims, and I suspect he lacks the resources to do so. Instead, he largely confines himself to a few derisory remarks. To give him credit, though, he does endeavor to analyze certain natural-law arguments for a conservative sexual morality. But he botches things. He presents an argument by the philosopher Edward Feser as a version, "less encumbered by abstractions" of the natural-law position than Princeton professor of jurisprudence Robert George's presentation of the same argument. He fails to note that Feser and George have entirely different



[*Jeans: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, James Sullivan, Gotham Books, 320 pages]

## Riveting Account

by Michael Brendan Dougherty

YOU CAN WALK into any trendy bar in New York City and see a woman whose hips, thighs, and other assets are sculpted in denim, her thin, almost boyish body poured into her jeans. In her dexterous right hand she is sending a text message through her cell phone and holding a \$21 martini. You may not know it, but she is being judged. The other upwardly mobile women of Manhattan can tell if those jeans are “Sevens,” “Luckys,” or “Joes” by the seams sewn into the pockets. “Oh-migod,” one of these might say to a friend with equal parts admiration and jealousy—“those are Dolce and Gabbanas, and they cost \$700!”

James Sullivan’s new book *Jeans: A Cultural History of An American Icon* explains how blue jeans were transformed from a humble worker’s garment to cowboy chic, from a symbol of teenage rebellion to a status indicator for ambitious urban career women. Along the way, we find the history of the indigo trade, the machinations of advertising departments, and the sexual revolution. “All blue jeans,” he asserts, “... share an ‘Americana’ feel. They may be cut and sewn in Japan, Vietnam, or Hong Kong, using denim from mills in Mexico, India, Italy, or Turkey and synthetic dye from Germany or Brazil. Yet wherever its origins, a pair of blue jeans embodies two centuries’ worth of the myths and ideals of American culture.” Who knew those five riveted pockets could hold so much?

Levi Strauss and the company that carries his name remains the most consequential figure in the history of jeans. Immigrating from Bavaria in 1847, he joined his brothers’ dry goods business in lower Manhattan. He left for San

Francisco in 1854, and at the age of 24 set up his dry goods store on Sacramento Street. An invoice detailing an order for three dozen pairs of “jeans pants” for \$45 is dated March 17, 1859. Strauss was a wholesaler of jeans until he started manufacturing them in 1873. But jeans as we know them were not invented until Jacob Davis, a tailor in Reno, Nevada constructed a pair for a woodcutter whose pants had the nasty habit of coming apart at the seams. Taking duck cloth from Levi Strauss, Davis added his own innovation, which he described in a letter to Strauss when he proposed they go halves on a patent application.

“The secratt of them Pents, is the Rivits that I put in those Pockets, and I found the demand so large that I cannot make them up fast enough. My nabors are getting yealouse of these success and unless I secure it by Patent Papers it will soon become a general thing.”

When Levi’s patent expired in 1890, companies like Sweet-Orr and Can’t Bust ‘Em began selling riveted denim trousers, and all of them advertised their product by showing men, elephants, or dogs trying and failing to rip the jeans in half in a tug-of-war. Duck and denim overalls with rivets reinforcing the seams began to spread to industrial workers and farmers over the West and South.

Miners and cattle ranchers also found practical use for coarse denim pants in their thankless and tiring work. So jeans became one of the many details incorporated into the imagery surrounding the American cowboy. This mythic man was the “lone figure of the fearless, irrepressible, duty-bound, yet nomadic westerner,” captured by Owen Wister in his 1902 novel *The Virginian*. Over the next two decades, as the popularity of dude ranches increased with well-to-do easterners looking for a vacation out West, jeans were introduced to women for the first time. *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle* began promoting the trend to their readers in 1935, the same year Levi’s introduced its Lady Levi’s campaign. The buckskin pants of Davy Crockett have been left to history, yet jeans continue

on as the uniform of the westerner. Wrangler, one of the “big three” manufacturers, built its entire company around western folklore.

By the 1940s, socialist intellectuals began wearing dungarees in order to identify with the working classes. Sullivan finds them in Orwell’s *Down and Out in Paris and London*. The Eton-educated Orwell wrote, “I had worn bad enough things before, but not at all like these, they were not merely dirty and shapeless, they had—how is one to express it?—a gracelessness, a patina of antique filth, quite different from mere shabbiness.” Sullivan himself isn’t immune to drawing political lessons from his back pocket, declaiming that the democratic ideal is a crucial part of the blue jeans myth. “Jeans are the great American icebreaker, common to welfare recipients and MBAs alike.” But when was the last time you saw a welfare recipient and an MBA talking with each other because of their jeans? Jeans do not symbolize the classless society. The designer jeans the MBA wears should be a sign that in fact class inevitably co-opts every symbol onto which the counterculture lashes its vision of a classless society. Jeans may have been the workwear of the proletariat for much of the 20th century, but they were always produced and sold by capitalists.

Hollywood contributed to the glamour and the sales of jeans when John Ford’s “Stagecoach” hit theatres in 1939. John Wayne’s Ringo Kid wore Levi’s 501 jeans with the cuffs turned up at the boots. But Levi’s 501s came to symbolize something much more threatening when in 1953 they were fitted onto Marlon Brando for László Benedek’s “The Wild One”—a film about outlaw bikers. Sullivan draws our attention to the devil-may-care pose Brando’s character embodied. One girl asks him, “Hey Johnny, what are you rebelling against?”

“Whaddya got?”

Levi’s 501 jeans went on from Hollywood screen to become the largest selling garment in the history of manufactured clothing.

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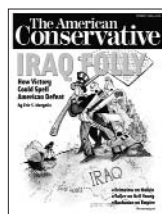
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We can guess the rest of the story from there: the hippies wearing jeans as they watched Jimi Hendrix wear his jeans at Woodstock, the Gap opening in 1969, the bellbottom craze of the 1970s. And, of course, there is the incredible amount of controversy surrounding the advertising of jeans. Italy's Jesus Jeans had billboards and posters showing a young woman's denim-clad money-maker with the caption "He who loves me, follows me." Brooke Shields's suggestive lips said, "You know what comes between me and my Calvin's? Nothing." Then there were the soft-porn ad booklets put into fashion magazines in the 1990s to launch Request Jeans. Sullivan finds one *Adweek* writer tut-tutting: "Add cleavage, a vaguely threatening storyline suggesting imminent violence, bi-and/or homosexuality, and somebody relieving himself and voilà, you have yourself an ad campaign." At the start of his book Sullivan notes that when Brigham Young first encountered trousers with a button front in the 19th century, he vilified them as "fornication pants." I wonder why there isn't a boutique brand under that name already.

Sullivan occasionally plays apostle for the Gospel of Denim. "Blue jeans contain all our multitudes—young and old, rural and urban, labor and leisure, high life and low." This kind of blather, though grating, is essential to justify writing 265 pages about one garment. (Did I mention that the font of the book is blue, too?) The assumption is that the history of jeans can't be interesting unless it tells us something essential about ourselves or our country. Luckily, Sullivan has found enough narrative to keep the book from becoming insufferable.

McLuhan said, "Jeans represent a rip-off and rage against the establishment," and he couldn't have been more wrong. Jeans are the mass-produced uniform for the mass man and woman. They are practically the clothing that comes with existence for people under 50. No piece of clothing more represents the establishment than jeans. It is no surprise then that people would start tearing

them apart, decorating them, drawing on them; that retailers and manufacturers would discover the human appetite for distinction in class and begin charging outrageous prices for designer, vintage, and authentic selvedge jeans. High-end designers embraced denim and high-end prices with them. Celebrity magazines started noting what brand of jeans Jennifer Lopez, the Olsen twins, or Angelina Jolie were wearing. Classic brands like Levi's thought designer jeans too faddish to embrace them and remained loyal to their American workforce to the detriment of profits and the brand's cache. Far from the social-democratic ideal that jeans were thought to represent, one of the hottest brands of designer jeans is named "Monarchy."

After reading Sullivan's song of blue jeans, I found myself in a trendy New York club wearing light cotton pants to honor the last days of summer. A young lady in a little black dress tried to sucker me for a drink. As I brushed off her request, I saw that she and I were sartorial aliens, or worse, anachronists. Was I snob? Every other person wore jeans. They've taken over—making corduroy, moleskin, even khakis into mere also-rans that the Gap might revive and discard in one season. The young men wore stovepipe jeans, slim British-rock-star-style jeans, boot-cut jeans, baggy prison-style jeans that require constant jostling, torn up punk jeans, classic 501 jeans, even Carhartt work jeans. The women were just as diverse in their choice of denim—flared, low rise, medium rise, petite fits that carry the name "provocateur" in the catalog, "twiggy" jeans for tall girls, and one unfortunate lass in what we call "mom jeans." The club was suffocating in premium denim and cheap lust. Then through the door walked a blonde in \$200 Citizens' "Avedon" jeans exquisitely molded around her body—making the curve of her hips apparent. Who can fight this? ■

*Michael Brendan Dougherty is books editor of the New Pantagruel.*

# Racist Revving & Other Inanities



If you thought comedy was dead, you should have been in Britain after the pope cited the opinion of a Byzantine emperor who died 600 years ago.

As the Muslim furor broke, a British motorist was arrested by the fuzz for revving his motor in a “racist” manner. Yes, in these politically correct times, engines too can be racists, especially if revved up.

Motorist Ronnie Hutton claimed he was trying to solve an engine problem of his Lotus Esprit by revving it. He also claimed he had not noticed that a Libyan couple dressed in traditional Arab dress was walking nearby. An off-duty passing policeman arrested Hutton for trying to intimidate the couple. He was thrown into jail for 48 hours and then made to pay a fine of £150 for behaving in a “racially aggravated manner.”

The Libyan couple had lived in Britain only two years, but they’ve been quick learners. When interviewed by the cops, they used such words as scared, embarrassed, and degraded. “It was our ethnic clothing that provoked him.” No doubt the state will soon recompense them for feeling humiliated, and rather generously too. (My first reaction upon reading this was to try and find some ambulance-chasing shyster for the next time I’m in New York. New York ethnic taxi drivers have particularly loud horns, and they love to blast them. As I usually dress in pinstripes, it could be construed as reverse racism. One never knows nowadays.)

But back to the pope. And more comedy. It turns out that the bearded radical who led the anti-pope demonstrations and demanded His Holiness’s execution claims \$3,000 a month in housing benefits and income support. For any of you who might not be familiar with British socialist jargon, housing

benefits and income support means the state gives you lotsa moolah for not having a job. Anjem Choudary, a 39-year-old layabout, was born in the outskirts of London, qualified as a lawyer thanks to the opportunities of the state system, but now prefers to preach hatred and murder to the next generation of British Muslims—and, of course, live off the state. Here’s one of his pearls of wisdom that thrill the faithful: “I have a British passport, but that’s a travel document to me. I refuse to adopt British values. I’m a Muslim living in Britain, but I’m not British.”

This comedian is taken seriously by the clowns who run Britain. Following last summer’s London subway and bus attacks, Tony Blair promised to crack down on “preachers of hate” and to close any mosque or Muslim school that

to accept a daily barrage of blasphemy, ridicule, and mockery poured out through television, aimed at Jesus Christ and the Christian faith, means nothing to those who lead us and to whom we give our votes time and again.

As everyone knows by now, the pope had absolutely nothing to apologize for. The media blew it out of all proportion, starting with the pathetic *New York Times*, which dared speak down to the wonderful pope as if he were some schoolboy who had stolen a lollypop. Who? The paper that gave us Jayson Blair, not to mention Judith Miller.

It is now clear that militant Muslims living among us are fast getting to the point where people are being intimidated into silence about Islam in a very similar manner to that in which people are being cowed by neocons into silence about the Israeli lobby’s pernicious influence in American politics. Crying wolf is the name of the game. Foxman, Der-showitz, Choudary, they’re one and the same. And Uncle Sam and John Bull just

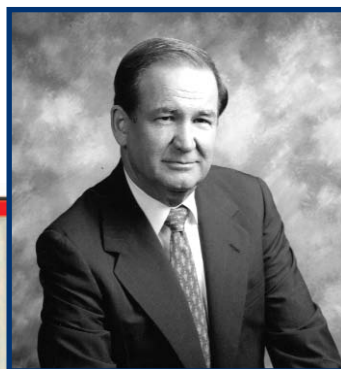
**SELF-CENSORSHIP IS *DE RIGUEUR*, WHILE ACCUSATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM ARE HURLED AT THOSE TELLING THE TRUTH.**

advocated violence. He and his administration have done nothing of the sort. PC, and that’s all there is to it, prevents anyone from throwing the book at these scoundrels. In fact, it’s the PC culture that has become so imbued in Western culture that prevents anyone from doing something about the fifth column in our midst. Even the venerable old *Spectator*, for which I’ve been writing for close to 30 years, recently cut my column in half because I dared to refer to these bearded hate-mongers using a banal term they ludicrously regard as an ethnic slur. The fact that Christians have

sit there and take it. Self-censorship and back-to-front thinking are *de rigueur*, while accusations of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are hurled at those telling the truth.

But winning the war against terrorism is about telling the truth, something this grotesque administration does not begin to comprehend. Blair and Bush are the two greatest disasters Britain and America have had to endure since time immemorial. In the meantime, extremists like those who are demanding the pope’s head and those who are itching to bomb Iran are laughing all the way to the bank. ■

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